

Project / Unit: Upper Snake/South Fork Snake River Special Recreation Area (SRMA) and Tex Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA)

Priority: 1

State(s): ID

Congressional District(s): ID-2

Location:
Southeast Idaho, 20 miles northeast of Idaho Falls, Bonneville County

Estimate for FY <i>Choose an item.</i>	
Acres	\$
1,923	\$9,000,000
Acquired to Date	
12,154	\$37,616,057
Remaining to be Acquired	
2,883	\$9,448,700

Project Description:

The Upper Snake/South Fork Snake River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA, designated 1985) provides diverse water-based recreational opportunities for over 250,000 visitors per year. The majority of visitation is to fish the blue-ribbon native cutthroat trout population found in the Snake River. The Snake River is a culturally and economically valuable natural resource in the Eastern Idaho Region. Besides providing irrigation for millions of acres of agricultural land, the river is also an international draw for recreational opportunities, which provides an inflow of cash to local economies. The first World Fly Fishing Championship in North America took place on the South Fork in 1997. A March 26, 2004 USA Today article highlighted the Henrys Fork as one of the top ten places to fly fish. The Jackson One Fly Competition is held each year on the South Fork, taking advantage of a world-class blue-ribbon trout fishery. According to an economic report (Loomis, 2005), fishing and boating within the project area supports 350 jobs and generates \$12 million in income.

Born of snowmelt and springs among high ridges of Yellowstone country, the 42,900-acre Upper Snake/South Fork Snake River project is an area like no other in the West. Gliding through mountains, canyons, and meadows, and the vast farmlands of the Snake River plains, a 1980 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service evaluation rated this area the most valuable, biodiverse, and unique ecosystem in Idaho. The BLM designated the Snake River an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in 1985 due to these resources. It is considered Idaho's #1 Priority Wetland based on resource values and threats to the river (Idaho Parks & Recreation report).

The riparian corridor, lined with commanding cottonwood galleries (largest in the western United States) and a lush shrub understory, sustains a broad variety of plants, fish, birds, and wildlife populations. It is the only home for the Federally-threatened Ute ladies'-tresses orchid in Idaho and the Federally-threatened yellow-billed cuckoo. It is a world famous blue-ribbon fishery, supporting the largest wild Yellowstone cutthroat trout population outside of Yellowstone National Park, and provides multiple wildlife migration corridors and habitat connectivity including habitat for the expanding Yellowstone National Park grizzly bear population, a Federally-threatened species. The area provides crucial habitat for 126 bird species (most of them neotropical migrants), including the majority of Idaho's bald eagle production (with 27 nesting territories), and has been designated as a Nationally Important Bird Area.

Tex Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is a mosaic of public lands that include U.S. Bureau of Reclamation lands, BLM-managed lands and Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) lands that collectively protect 35,000 acres of foothills habitat managed by the IDFG. The WMA provides crucial, irreplaceable winter range for 4,000 elk, 3,000 mule deer, and several hundred moose. The WMA winter range supports mule deer and elk from major portions of four Game Management Units and is vital to maintaining regional big game hunting opportunities.

This project area shares a contiguous boundary with the Caribou-Targhee National Forest and serves as a national model for working with private landowners and partners for land conservation and providing access for recreation. The project strategically utilizes conservation easements and land acquisition to preserve the unique values of this area. The Conservation Fund and Teton Regional Land Trust are working with the private landowners to coordinate the sale of the parcels.

Purpose / Need:

The acquisition of three parcels in fee title totals 1,923 acres of newly accessible land, including: 1,393 acres of newly accessible or improved access to public lands, approximately six miles of new non-motorized trail, and approximately four miles of new motorized trail to the public.

These fee acquisitions will increase outdoor recreation opportunities and help to improve the management of game species and their habitat. This project would expand opportunities for big-game hunting by improving habitats and corridors. These acquisitions would secure greater access for the public for a variety of different outdoor recreation opportunities and conserve significant big game migration corridors, crucial winter range, and tremendous fishing and hunting opportunities.

Stinking Springs Parcels: Acquisition of two parcels (1,332 acres) would add significant value to landscape-level habitat protection by buffering the expansive cottonwood corridor, consolidating habitat protection for over 3,500 wintering mule deer and other big game, protecting Critical Habitat for the federally-threatened yellow-billed cuckoo, and helping to secure long-term conservation of other BLM Sensitive species.

The two parcels are readily accessed by the Heise River Road, an important seasonal conduit to the South Fork corridor for hunters, anglers, and other recreationists. Acquisition of the parcels would solidify public ownership and increase and diversify public access for outdoor recreationists using the South Fork corridor and adjacent uplands. A designated motorized trail (Stinking Springs) and separate mountain bike trail (Sidewinder) exist on the adjacent uplands (BLM-managed lands). The opportunity to expand these trails onto the proposed parcels would expand recreation opportunities.

Dogtooth Farms Phase Two Parcel: The acquisition of Dogtooth Farms Phase Two, and incorporation into Tex Creek WMA would add significant value to landscape-level habitat protection for wintering big game and wildlife species designated as an Idaho Department of Fish and Game species of greatest concern and/or BLM Sensitive species.

The Dogtooth Farms property was originally proposed for acquisition in 2011, recognized for decades as a key property for wildlife conservation and maintenance of landscape connectivity. A portion of the property, Phase One, was acquired by the BLM in 2016 (all portions of Dogtooth Farms LLC west of the Harris Bench Road). Phase Two (all portions of Dogtooth Farms LLC east of the Harris Bench Road) is currently for sale. Phase Two is 591 acres of agricultural fields, aspen stands, riparian bottoms, and canyon lands. The agricultural fields are currently in permanent cover, having recently been enrolled in USDA's Conservation Reserve Program, and are predominantly rhizomatous grasses. The aspen stands consist of stringers along steeper areas on Harris Bench as well as the lower portions of Dogtooth Hollow and along the upper portions

of the canyon lands. The riparian bottoms include the lower portions of Dogtooth Hollow and a stretch of Meadow Creek. The canyon lands include the steep edge of Meadow Creek canyon.

Acquisition of the Dogtooth Farms Phase Two would prevent habitat fragmentation that would inhibit wildlife use (especially in winter) on adjacent WMA lands. This property and the immediate vicinity provide food and security to a large number of wintering wildlife, which holds a large number of those animals on the east side of the Willow Creek canyon, limiting the impacts of large herds of big game on neighboring private agricultural fields.

Cooperator(s):

The Conservation Fund, Teton Regional Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Local county & municipal support, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, Bonneville Power Administration, Ducks Unlimited, Trout Unlimited, Henrys Fork Foundation, Henrys Fork Legacy Project, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rocky Mt. Elk Foundation, Heart of the Rockies Initiative

Estimated O&M Savings:	Start-up: \$10,000	Annual: \$2,000
Estimated O&M Costs:	Start-up: \$50,000	Annual: \$7,000

Describe O&M:

Upon acquisition of the parcels, the field office would need to develop public parking areas or access to the parcels. There could be removal and installation of fences. Information and interpretive signing would also be needed on the properties.

Project / Unit: Sands Desert Habitat Management Area (HMA)/Teton River

Priority: 2

State(s): ID

Congressional District(s): ID-2

Location:

Southeast Idaho, 1 parcel ~45 miles north of Idaho Falls and 1 parcel ~60 miles north east of Idaho Falls. Includes Clark County

Estimate for FY <i>Choose an item.</i>	
Acres	\$
9,191	\$3,000,000
Acquired to Date	
762	\$4,190,000
Remaining to be Acquired	
8,224	\$7,438,600

Project Description:

The Sands Desert Habitat Management Area (HMA) encompass some of the best remaining sagebrush steppe habitat in the State of Idaho. This high-quality habitat supports healthy populations of two species of national importance: the Greater Sage-Grouse and the Columbian sharp-tailed grouse. For Idahoans though, it is best known for its large mammal populations.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game’s (IDFG) Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy recognized the value of this habitat. These substantial game resources also support outstanding hunting opportunities for both Idahoans and nonresidents.

A high-profile OHV program at the St. Anthony Sand Dunes Special Recreation Management Area, within the Sands Desert HMA, also supports the local rural economies. Additionally, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes rely heavily on the areas to continue their aboriginal hunting and gathering Treaty rights.

The wildlife habitat in Sands Desert HMA, Teton River, and Medicine Lodge Creek area is comprised principally of high-quality native ranges. Wildlife diversity is high, resulting from the diversity of the habitat and abundance of water. This area has been recognized by the State of Idaho as a priority big game winter range and migration corridor and supports the following wildlife: Mule deer, white-tailed deer, Rocky Mountain elk, Pronghorn antelope, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, mountain goats, Canada lynx, Gray wolves, wolverine. This area also has important habitat for Greater Sage-Grouse. According to the Sage Grouse Initiative interactive mapping tool, the Medicine Lodge area is considered a Priority Area for Conservation (PAC). The PAC represents the most important areas needed for maintaining sage grouse representation, redundancy, and resilience across the landscape. Medicine Lodge is a popular area for hunting. Preserving this area will also benefit the public by providing opportunities for hunting.

Purpose / Need:

The acquisition of conservation easements on two parcels totals 9,191 acres. Conservation easements on these parcels opens 6,062 acres of newly accessible private land; 1,949 acres of newly accessible or improved access to public lands; 5.5 miles of creek access, and 13 miles of roads to the public.

These conservation easements will expand hunting and fishing opportunities by providing public access on the two parcels, increasing outdoor recreation opportunities, and improving the management of game species

and their habitat. This project would expand opportunities for big-game hunting by improving habitats and corridors.

The IDFG developed the Idaho Acton Plan (October 2019). The Plan identifies 5 Priority Areas. The two parcels identified in this submission are within the Big Desert-Mountain Valley Complex Priority Area.

Medicine Lodge Creek Parcel

This parcel lies at the bottom of Medicine Lodge drainage and is surrounded by approximately 20,000 acres of BLM and USFS federally managed lands. The acquisition of a conservation easement with public access would primarily be for the public to access Medicine Lodge Creek to fish. This property has 100% intact native habitat which is in good condition. It provides important habitat for many big game species including sage-grouse in the Medicine Lodge area. There are a few sage-grouse leks that exist on the property.

Medicine Lodge is in Clark County, Idaho and has a long tradition of Native American history, abundant wildlife, farming, ranching, hunting, and fishing. Clark County’s first inhabitants were forerunners to the Northern Shoshoni and the Nez Perce Tribe. The Nez Perce Tribe used this general area as a route to their buffalo hunting grounds in Montana. Early trappers and explorers, including Lieutenant Mullen traveled through Medicine Lodge Canyon from Montana into Idaho on his way to Fort Hall. The first Euro-Americans entered the subbasin in 1819. They were fur trappers led by Donald Mackenzie of the British-owned Northwest Company. They were followed by American trappers in 1824.

The owners of the property homesteaded the area, and in 1881, Dennis Small built the first cabin on Medicine Lodge Creek. A community called Medicine Lodge was soon established near the Small cabin. It included a post office, school, and store. The post office operated until 1959. Other ranches were established by the mid-1880s. The Edie Ranch’s school and post office were established around 1900. The family operates a cattle ranch and a small section of the property has 4-5 cabins that are used for a chuck wagon trail ride for tourists. The preservation of working the lands will continue with this conservation easement.

Camas Creek Parcel

The acquisition of a conservation easement with public access will conserve and enhance hunting recreational opportunities within the Sands Desert HMA. Specifically, the acquisitions will conserve significant big game migration corridors and crucial elk winter range. The parcel has three known sage-grouse leks and suitable sage-grouse habitat. The property is utilized by the landowner for cattle grazing and the preservation of working the lands will continue with this conservation easement. This property was burned in the Grassy Ridge fire and it will be key to work with the landowner to help the habitat recover.

Cooperator(s):

The Conservation Fund, Teton Regional Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, Rocky Mt. Elk Foundation, US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Estimated O&M Savings:	Start-up: \$20,000	Annual: \$1,000
Estimated O&M Costs:	Start-up: \$500	Annual: \$1,000

Describe O&M:

Savings are from partner contributions towards the acquisition process and by not purchasing properties in fee. Annual savings are from partner contributions for annual conservation easement stewardship.

Start up costs would be signing conserved properties and annual conservation easement stewardship. Information and interpretive signing would also be needed on the properties for public access.

Project / Unit: Rio Grande del Norte National Monument

Priority: 3

State(s): NM

Congressional District(s): NM-3

Location:

Northern New Mexico, approximately 30 miles northwest of Taos.

Estimate for FY <i>Choose an item.</i>	
Acres	\$
1,286	\$1,000,000
Acquired to Date	
3,257	\$3,272,000
Remaining to be Acquired	
23,308	\$8,574,400

Project Description:

The project opens 242,000 acres of newly accessible land in Rio Grande del Norte National Monument (RGDNNM) to increase outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans and support wildlife movement, migration and/or winter range. The project provides opportunities to hunting and improve the management of games species and their habitat for this generation and beyond.

On March 25, 2013, President Obama designated approximately 242,555 acres as the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument. Private inholdings within the Monument are vulnerable to increasing residential and “off grid” developments. Acquisition of five inholding properties would enhance BLM’s ability to protect fragile cultural, biological and scenic resources within the National Monument, which contains the Taos Plateau ACEC and Wild Scenic Rio Grande Corridor. The acquisition would secure and increase traditional and recreational access, and prevent fragmentation of a vital state wildlife area, when native hunters first followed the massive migrating herds of Mammuthus primigenius (wooley mammoth) and Bison antiquus (mega bison), into the region. The Plateau is rife with remains of the earliest known human cultural in the hemisphere with petroglyph, tipi rings, wickiup structures, arrow heads, and pottery shard scattered across the landscape. Continuing archaeological investigation has documented over 500 recorded sites. Several Native American Tribes and descendants of Hispanic settlers continue to traditionally use these lands as an important area for hunting, gathering of native plants, pinion nuts, firewood, and grazing. Hunting, camping, wildlife viewing, fishing and renowned whitewater rafting contribute much-needed economic revenue to nearby rural communities. Access to the interior of the Monument and preservation of the rugged, wide-open landscape and vistas would be reserved through the acquisition.

The acquisition would also protect habitat for species of Greatest Conservation Need listed in the comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy for NM; Gunnison’s Paririe dog, loggerhead shrike and burrowing owl, all BLM sensitive species. The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish identified the Taos Plateau as the most important winter range habitat for elk populations moving between CO and NM and best suited habitat for mule deer relocation projects. Up to 10,000 elk winter on the plateau each year. Mule deer, pronghorn and wild sheep also depend on key habitat resources classified for protection in the NM Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (sagebrush shrubland, mixed conifer forest/woodland and wet meadow). The proposed acquisition would provide alternative public access routes. New construction is anticipated, and the existing road network will be utilized.

Purpose / Need:

Acquire private inholdings within the Monument, preserve traditional uses, secure connectivity to the Rio Grande Wild & Scenic Corridor, preserve avian and wildlife habitat, protect prehistoric human habitation sites, and improve recreation & tourism.

The four properties within the Monument face immediate threat of residential development. Landowners are interested in selling and have expressed that the lands be conserved for future generations, and non-government organizations are engaged.

Cooperator(s):

NM Department of Game and Fish (DGF), Rio Grande del Norte Coalition, NM Wilderness Alliance, NM Wildlife Federation, The Wilderness Society, Trout Unlimited, Mule Deer Foundation, and Backcountry Hunters & Anglers. Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Trust of Public Land are willing to assist BLM with the proposed land purchase upon receiving LWCF funding.

Estimated O&M Savings:	Start-up: 0	Annual: 0
Estimated O&M Costs:	Start-up: \$10,000	Annual: \$5,000

Describe O&M:

O & M Costs: Boundary Fence and maintenance

Project / Unit: Arizona National Scenic Trail

Priority: 4

State(s): AZ

Congressional District(s): AZ-4

Location:

In the White Canyon Resource Conservation Area east of the Town of Florence, approximately 50 miles southeast of Phoenix, in Pinal County.

Estimate for FY <i>Choose an item.</i>	
Acres	\$
148	\$600,000
Acquired to Date	
0	0
Remaining to be Acquired	
0	0

Project Description:

The project is in the 265,000-acre White Canyon Resource Conservation Area (RCA), administratively designated in the Phoenix Resource Management Plan to retain the public lands for long-term management of multiple outstanding resource values and consolidate management. The RCA includes approximately 122,520 acres of Federal land with the 96,000-acre Middle Gila Canyons Travel Management Area, White Canyon Wilderness, and the Arizona National Scenic Trail, the Gila River Riparian Management Area, and an extensive network of primitive travel routes identified in the current travel management plan for motorized recreation access. The project area is near major population centers and is popular for a variety of OHV recreation, back country and primitive wilderness recreation, non-motorized trail recreation, hunting, sightseeing, and other dispersed recreation activities in scenic canyon and mountain settings.

The project is within the general corridor of the Arizona National Scenic Trail, established in 2009 by an amendment of the National Trail System Act under Public Law 111-11. The project would provide opportunities to develop a side-trail for education and interpretation of the cultural heritage represented by the features on the parcel along the Trail, complementing the nature and purposes of the Trail. The project is also along a motorized route with high public recreational use and would provide opportunities for OHV sightseers to enjoy the site and learn about its history and significance.

Purpose / Need:

The proposed acquisition would protect the approximately 148 acres parcel and allow preservation of a significant cultural heritage feature and popular sightseeing attraction in the White Canyon RCA. The parcel is surrounded by public land, and the project would consolidate ownership and improve manageability of the public lands and prevent impacts of potential development on the parcel and adjacent public lands. It would also provide legal public access to the property for recreational and educational purposes and improve connectivity of the local transportation route network.

The property owner acquired the property in 1983 to protect it from development and has been interested in transferring the property to the BLM to ensure it is preserved for long-term public use and enjoyment. The property includes unique stone masonry structures used to produce charcoal fuel from the riparian woodland along the Gila River and historic wagon roads to the nearby Martinez, Silverbell, and Columbia mines and mill dating to the early 1900s, which are important remnants of the area's mining and local transportation history. The parcel includes USFWS designated critical habitat for the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher

(Empidonax traillii extimus) and the Yellow-Billed Cuckoo (Coccyzus americanus). The parcel is within Category 2 Sonoran desert tortoise (Gopherus agassizii), a sensitive species for BLM Arizona.

Cooperator(s):

Supporters include James Copeman, property owner, Pinal County Open Space and Trails Department, The Town of Florence, the Pinal County Historical Society and Museum, the Arizona Trail Association, and the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

Estimated O&M Savings:	Start-up: 0	Annual: 0
Estimated O&M Costs:	Start-up: \$70,000	Annual: \$7,000

Describe O&M:

There are no identified operating and management cost savings.

Start-up O&M costs would include developing a visitor management and interpretive plan with minimal facilities, historic property assessments and preservation plans, clean-up of non-historic trash and debris, and maintenance or repairing existing primitive roads, trails and fences, and installing signs. Cost sharing would be pursued with potential partners and volunteers.

Annual O&M thereafter include: maintaining the access roads and trails, maintaining the minimal visitor management facilities and signs, and monitoring the site.

Project / Unit: Big Snowy Mountains Access

Priority: 5

State(s): MT

Congressional District(s): MT At Large

Location:

Golden Valley County, 23 miles north of Ryegate and 29 miles east of Judith Gap, abutting the south boundaries of the BLM's Twin Coulee WSA and USFS's Big Snowy Mountains WSA

Estimate for FY <i>Choose an item.</i>	
Acres	\$
5,629	\$6,700,000
Acquired to Date	
0	0
Remaining to be Acquired	
6,800	\$6,500,000

Project Description:

The Big Snowy Mountains are an isolated mountain range of public ownership surrounded by privately owned foothills, typical of island mountain ranges in central Montana. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) manages the 88,969-acre Big Snowy Mountain Wilderness Study Area (WSA), while the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages the 6,936-acre Twin Coulee WSA.

The Big Snowies are rich in wildlife, especially elk, but public access is extremely limited, particularly in the southeast quadrant. The lack of public access to elk is the largest contributing factor to the elk population being approximately 900% over objective. The Big Snowy Mountains Access project would significantly improve public access to the southeast quadrant of the Big Snowies and particularly to the BLM's Twin Coulee WSA.

Purpose / Need:

This native mountain foothill habitat provides habitat for a diverse assemblage of species, including, elk, black bear, mule deer, pronghorn, and other native species populations, including at least 22 "Species of Concern." These habitats are also beneficial in maintaining huntable and viewable populations of game and non-game species, both migratory and resident. Elevation ranges from 4,750 – 6,000 feet.

This fee acquisition will conserve lands and waters, protect biodiversity, and facilitate natural climate solutions by limiting habitat fragmentation and conversion of land to rural residential subdivision. The acquisition will significantly enhance access to BLM's Twin Coulee WSA. Numerous cultural resource features (teepee rings and camps) are located on the property and will be preserved. The Blackfeet, Gros Ventre, and Crow Tribes use this area to continue their aboriginal hunting and gathering Treaty rights, and as a result, this acquisition supports those communities.

Public access to the BLM's Twin Coulee WSA and the USFS's Big Snowy Mountain WSA remains extremely limited. The Project would acquire 5,629 acres, establishing new access to 5,629 acres and improved access to 96,000 acres.

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is facilitating the sale of this property. Fee title acquisition will ensure perpetual protection and management of the habitat to benefit wildlife and native plants. The property has minimal interior fencing and no structures. The property is surrounded by large absentee landowners who rarely allow recreational opportunities to the general public. This property will provide permanent access to incredible wildlife habitat and public recreation opportunities, including access to the Snowy Mountains Elk Population.

Cooperator(s):

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Shodair Children's Hospital of Montana.

Estimated O&M Savings:	Start-up: 0	Annual: 0
Estimated O&M Costs:	Start-up: \$15,800	Annual: \$8,000

Describe O&M:

Click or tap here to enter text. Describe the operation and management savings and costs associated with the acquisition at start-up and annually thereafter.

Agency:

Fiscal Year: 2022

Project / Unit: High Divide

Priority: 6

State(s): MT

Congressional District(s): MT At Large

Location:

The High Divide landscape is a continentally significant centerpiece for biological connectivity between the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, the Crown of the Continent, and the vast wildlands of Central Idaho.

Estimate for FY <i>Choose an item.</i>	
Acres	\$
5,347	\$5,400,000
Acquired to Date	
0	0
Remaining to be Acquired	
6,800	\$6,500,000

Project Description:

The High Divide is an expansive landscape that stretches across eastern Idaho and southwest Montana along the spine of the continent. Here the Continental Divide separates the headwaters of two of North America's great rivers, the Missouri/Mississippi and the Snake/Columbia rivers that flow in opposite directions to their respective oceans. At the same time, the High Divide's wide-ranging wildlife, cultural heritage, and indomitable rural people pull together a landscape that is ecologically and socially cherished for its communities and natural treasures.

Because the High Divide is not centered around a protected icon like Yellowstone or Glacier National Park, it is often referred to as "the land in between." The High Divide landscape is a continentally significant centerpiece for biological connectivity between the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, the Crown of the Continent, and the vast wildlands of Central Idaho. This land in between is not only ecologically rich, the region features a deep cultural heritage, vibrant rural communities, large working ranches that graze livestock on private and public lands, and outstanding recreation opportunities.

There are two acquisitions proposed. MTX Ranch was brought to BLM's attention by The Conservation Fund who is interested in partnering with us to acquire this property. The entire property is bordered to the south, east, and west by Bureau of Land Management land. To the north the property is intermixed with BLM and private lands. It is located in the heart of Brown's Gulch Mining District and has a deep history connected to the gold rush era of the 1860s. There are many two-track roads connecting public lands and allowing access to big game hunting for elk, whitetail and mule deer, and black bears as well as increasing habitat connectivity in this important region of the High Divide. Recreationists can enjoy the area's scenic views by foot, horseback and ATVs and UTVs in the summer and cross country skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling in the winter with the established road system on the property.

The Bear Trap Canyon Fishing Ranch property consists of approximately 101 acres and shares borders on the east with the BLM and the Madison River and on the south and west with Montana State managed lands. The property is adjacent to the popular BLM Warm Springs day use area and controls access to nine miles of BLM land on the west side of the Madison River via a trailhead on premises. The present landowner allowed courtesy access via the footpath however this is subject to change with a new landowner. The Madison River is a very popular spot for floating and fishermen alike. The Madison is a blue ribbon river that offers an amazing diversity of water and varies significantly from its source in Yellowstone National Park to its confluence with the Missouri River. Different sections of the river offer different habitat, scenery, hatches, and fishing techniques. The prospect of having this parcel connected to an already well developed and popular day use area would be a good addition to the public lands inventory.

Purpose / Need:

These fee acquisitions will conserve lands and waters, protect biodiversity, and facilitate natural climate solutions by limiting habitat fragmentation and conversion of land to rural residential subdivision. Critical riparian areas are found along the Madison River, Williams Creek, and Browns Gulch. The area serves as a crucial linkage corridor between the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the Northern Continental Divide recovery zones for grizzly bear (listed T&E species) and for Canada lynx. The acquisition will enhance public access for numerous recreational activities by acquiring, connecting, and consolidating existing BLM and State lands along the Madison River and in the historic Virginia City (Territorial Capital) area. Numerous historic mining features will be preserved on the MTX property. The Shoshone and Lemhi Tribes use this area to continue their aboriginal hunting and gathering Treaty rights, and as a result, this acquisition supports those communities.

Cooperator(s):

High Divide Collaborative, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Western River Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation

Estimated O&M Savings:	Start-up: 0	Annual: 0
Estimated O&M Costs:	Start-up: \$20,000	Annual: \$5,000

Describe O&M:

At present it is unclear what the O&M costs will be for the remaining projects. There are no structures to maintain or improve. Road and trail systems within the proposed acquisition may need improvement after the acquisition is complete.

Project / Unit: Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area

Priority: 7

State(s): CO

Congressional District(s): CO-3

Location:

The parcel is located along Escalante Canyon Road, in Montrose County, Colorado. It is approximately 16 miles southwest of the City of Delta, Colorado.

Estimate for FY <i>Choose an item.</i>	
Acres	\$
160	\$600,000
Acquired to Date	
1,135	\$4,171,500
Remaining to be Acquired	
160	\$600,000

Project Description:

Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area (NCA) comprises 210,172 acres of protected public lands and includes the 66,280-acre Dominguez Canyon Wilderness. The NCA was created by the 2009 Omnibus Public Lands Management Act and is managed as part of the Bureau of Land Management’s National Conservation Lands.

Known for its breathtaking scenery, Dominguez-Escalante NCA is a fine example of the spectacular canyon country of the Uncompahgre Plateau. Red-rock canyons and sandstone bluffs hold geological and paleontological resources spanning 600 million years, as well as many cultural and historic sites. The Ute Tribes today consider these pinyon-juniper-covered lands an important connection to their ancestral past. Escalante, Cottonwood, Little Dominguez, and Big Dominguez Creeks cascade through sandstone canyon walls that drain the eastern Uncompahgre Plateau. Unaweep Canyon on the northern boundary of the NCA contains globally significant geological resources. Elevations in the NCA are approximately 4,800 to 8,200 feet.

Nearly 30 miles of the Gunnison River flow through Dominguez-Escalante NCA, supporting fish, wildlife, and recreational resources. The Old Spanish National Historic Trail, a 19th century land trade route, also passes through it. A variety of wildlife call the area home, including desert bighorn sheep, mule deer, golden eagle, turkey, elk, mountain lion, black bear, and the collared lizard. There are 115 miles of streams and rivers in the NCA, and there is habitat suitable for 52 protected species of animals and plants.

The Dominguez-Escalante NCA Resource Management Plan and Travel Management Plan was approved in January 2017. An objective of the plan (LAN-OBJ-02) directs the BLM to continue to work with willing sellers to acquire non-Federal land within, and/or adjacent to, the National Conservation Area boundary if the acquisition will contribute to achieving the goals and objectives for the purposes of the NCA. This parcel, located along Escalante Creek would meet a BLM goal to pursue acquisition of land within the NCA from willing sellers on properties with high potential to improve water resource conditions (SWQ-MA-05).

Purpose / Need:

This acquisition would open a 160-acre private inholding within the NCA to public use. A county road runs through a portion of the property. Access from the county road would provide new opportunities for dispersed camping and new access points to Escalante Creek for boating and fishing. Approximately one-half mile of Escalante Creek flows through the parcel. Including this parcel in the National Conservation Area would

ensure continued protection of the undeveloped character of the Escalante Creek riparian corridor. The acquisition of the parcel would eliminate trespass situations caused by recreational users inadvertently entering the private property. No new recreational facilities would need to be immediately constructed to facilitate recreational activities; however the BLM may designate camp sites in the area.

Activities occurring within the Escalante Canyon area includes off-highway vehicle (OHV) riding, hunting, fishing, wildlife watching, kayaking, rock climbing, mountain biking, photography, camping, picnicking, swimming, and hiking. The 2017 Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan designates much of Escalante Canyon as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern, a Watchable Wildlife Area, and a Special Recreation Management Area; each providing special levels of protection that would be afforded to the Escalante Creek parcel. The Parcel would provide exceptional opportunities for hunting upland birds, such as chukar, and fishing along Escalante Creek. Local traffic counters recorded 2,403 visits to the area during the spring of 2020. The BLM would work with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to highlight these hunting and fishing opportunities if the property is acquired.

Acquisition of this inholding within Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area along Escalante Creek would protect important habitat for desert bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*) and mule deer and protect the endangered Colorado hookless cactus, rare Grand Junction milkvetch, and three BLM sensitive fish species, as well as protect sensitive riparian and scenic resources. A county road runs through the parcel which would provide additional access to Escalante Creek for hunting, fishing, and other recreational activities. Acquisition of this parcel would support would increase recreational opportunities on lands and waters managed by the U.S. Department of the Interior and increase public access to the area for hunting and fishing.

Cooperator(s):

The Conservation Fund, Interpretive Association of Western Colorado, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Colorado Canyons Association

Estimated O&M Savings:	Start-up: 0	Annual: 0
Estimated O&M Costs:	Start-up: \$30,000	Annual: \$5,000

Describe O&M:

Develop designated campsites with fire grates and tables. Add educational/informational kiosk for watchable wildlife.

Project / Unit: John Day Wild and Scenic River

Priority: 8

State(s): OR

Congressional District(s): OR-2

Location:

McDonald’s Ferry: 28 miles east of Wasco, Oregon; River mile 20 on the John Day River.

Estimate for FY <i>Choose an item.</i>	
Acres	\$
600	\$800,000
Acquired to Date	
11,149	\$6,655,000
Remaining to be Acquired	
0	0

Project Description:

This submission continues the process started in March 2018, which conveyed 4,083 acres along Thirtymile Creek using \$2,450,000 in FY16 LWCF Access funding and \$600,000 of reprogrammed FY15 LWCF funding. In 2019, Western Rivers conveyed another 7,066 acres using a \$5,000,000 LWCF Access appropriation. This submission requests the remaining funding needed for Phase II of the North Pole Ridge Acquisition and the McDonalds Ferry Parcel, both in the John Day River Project Area (16,600,000), which will be combined with the \$1.4 million remaining from Phase I acquisition, as well as \$3 million already received in FY20. Completing these two acquisitions will resolve all of the access issues along the John Day River.

The McDonald’s Ferry property, would add 4,100 acres and a significant portion of the Oregon Trail into public ownership. Total cost for this parcel is estimated to be \$5 million. The property, named for the historic ferry that settlers used to cross the JDR on their rugged journey west serves as an important reminder of the thousands of wagons that crossed the river, and the ruts from their travels are still visible today. In addition to serving as an important historic landmark, the site is the last take-out for boaters before the river reaches the impassible Tumwater Falls. WRC has indicated that the organization now has the McDonald's Ferry Ranch under contract and will buy the property in July 2020.

Visitors to these lands would experience the outstanding recreation and rich diversity of wildlife offered by the John Day Basin. Large ungulates, such as mule deer, elk, and antelope, are common year-round residents and many of the foothills along the John Day River are used as winter range by these species. Big game hunting is an important recreational activity and opportunities exist for hunting deer, antelope, elk, bighorn sheep, bear and predators such as coyotes and cougars. A limited number of antelope, and a very limited number of big horn sheep tags are issued in the planning area. Local, statewide, and out of state hunters come to hunt big game, and upland game birds, contributing to rural economies. Hunting units and wildlife management objectives are established by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, while BLM issues special recreation permits for commercial hunting. Additional lands into the public system would contribute additional hunting opportunities, and will also contribute to state wildlife goals for habitat and migration. Furthermore, over 75% of the 378 wildlife species in the John Day Basin rely on the riparian zones, making them the most critical zone to acquire. The landscape also provides enhanced opportunities for bats, neo-tropical and resident birds.

The JDR is also the Columbia Basin's most biologically diverse river system with the largest native fish populations in Oregon, including Mid-Columbia steelhead and bull trout—both of which are listed as

Threatened—and Chinook salmon. The system includes the mainstem and its North, Middle and South Forks and covers more than 500 river miles. The JDR and its tributaries have been identified as a salmon stronghold and key for recovery of important fish populations. Acquiring lands along the John Day river basin and the associated uplands adds to the conservation legacy of public lands in the United States.

Historically, various Tribal groups used the region for root collecting, hunting, fishing, and religious activities. These traditions continue today and road access to public lands will increase the availability of these activities and support tribal values.

Public acquisition of North Pole Ridge Ranch and McDonald's Ferry Ranch properties will open and enhance access to over 50,000 acres of BLM ownership along 18 miles of the John Day Wild and Scenic River corridor. These two parcels would increase connectivity and access between public lands for hunting, hiking, camping, bird watching, nature study, interpretation, equestrian sports, and mountain biking. Both new and increased road access would allow for more road-accessible recreation opportunities, and additional road access to the Lower John Day Wild and Scenic River would also offer new opportunities for fishing, dispersed camping from the river, picnicking and swimming. Private and guided trips for rafting, hunting, and fishing bring tourism dollars to these remote, underserved communities and are strongly supported.

Additional road access would also significantly improve wildland firefighting response to these remote areas. Currently, limited road access and irregular ownership patterns result in poor emergency ingress/egress. The JDR corridor has an extreme fire risk and wildfires that move off of public land and onto private impact ranches, agriculture, and local economies.

Purpose / Need:

The purpose of this land acquisition is to increase public access to landlocked parcels of public land, improve wildfire response to public lands in the John Day Basin, support local communities, and substantially increase access and the number of public acres available for hunting, fishing and other many types of motorized, mechanized and non-motorized recreation.

The proposed acquisitions will conserve and enhance habitat for big-game species, including Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, California bighorn sheep and American pronghorn. The properties include large expanses of sagebrush and grassland habitats that serve as important winter range. Consolidating public ownership and management along the John Day Wild & Scenic River and adjacent to the North Pole Ridge Wilderness Study Area will also improve the migratory corridor for big game moving between the upper and lower basin throughout the year. The Oregon Conservation Strategy, the statewide habitat and species conservation plan, identifies this area as an important Ecological Opportunity Area. In addition, the greater project area includes a State Scenic Waterways and State Wildlife Management Area as well as the JDR Wild & Scenic corridor, North Pole Ridge WSA, Thirtymile Creek WSA, and John Day Fossil Beds National Monument.

The JDR and its tributaries have been identified as a Salmon Stronghold and key for recovery of important fish populations. Both of the parcels combined have 18 miles of mainstem reaches that are primary migration corridors for spring Chinook and summer steelhead, with deep holes that provide critical holding habitat for upstream migrating fish. McDonald's Ferry Ranch offers an exciting opportunity to reconnect Grass Valley Canyon Creek, a historic steelhead spawning and rearing stream, to the mainstem river. To angler's, the strong returns of wild steelhead to the JDR make it one of Oregon's premier fishing destinations. The lower JDR is also a world class bass fishing destination.

The BLM becomes a better neighbor and steward to public lands by blocking up larger parcels and expanding access for hunting and fishing, while minimizing potential trespass to private lands. Checkerboard landscapes increase the chances for the public to inadvertently cross into private land and this acquisition would make improvements in the federal-private ownership mix on the landscape. Local communities support and benefit

from the proposed acquisitions. As has been seen with the creation of Cottonwood Canyon State Park and the Thirtymile Creek conveyances to BLM on the JDR, new and improved access to the JDR draws hunters, anglers and outdoor enthusiasts from far and wide to the area. Economic gains from increased visitations bring income to a variety of local businesses, including guides, outfitters, gun and tackle shops, hotels and motels, coffee shops, restaurants, gas stations and grocery stores. These small businesses provide a foundation for local economies and incomes.

This project complies with the Secretary's Order 3347, Conservation Stewardship and Outdoor Recreation, Order 3356, Hunting, Fishing, Recreational Shooting and Wildlife Conservation Opportunities and Coordination with States, Tribes and Territories by increasing outdoor recreation opportunities along the John Day Wild and Scenic River for all Americans. This action also supports Secretarial Order 3362, Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-game Winter Range and Migration Corridors. This acquisition also complies with Sec. Order 3373 to increase outdoor recreation, specifically hunting and fishing, with thousands of acres of uplands and several miles of riverfront.

The need for acquisitions of these lands in the John Day River Basin was established by the John Day Basin Resource Management Plan (Record of Decision, 2015), which designated these parcels as a priority for acquisition. The newly acquired lands will result in blocks of public land greater than 640 acres, provide access to the JDR, have significant cultural or historic value, have critical habitat for sensitive, threatened or endangered species, are within 0.25 mile of the JDR, expand existing uses such as recreation and/or support social and economic community uses and values. The RMP authorizes the acquisition of two percent of the planning area over the life of the plan, allowing the BLM to consider moving up to 110,000 acres into federal ownership.

Cooperator(s):

OR Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Gilliam Co., Wasco Co., Wheeler Co., Sherman Co., Wasco, Wheeler, Sherman, and Gilliam Co. Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Lower John Day Working Group, John Day Core Team, John Day Basin Partnership

Estimated O&M Savings:	Start-up: \$25,000	Annual: \$10,000
Estimated O&M Costs:	Start-up: 0	Annual: \$5,000

Describe O&M:

Maintenance of road and infrastructure supporting access across current privately held lands.
