

PAYETTE LAND TRUST

CONSERVING THE RURAL LANDSCAPE OF WEST CENTRAL IDAHO
A NON PROFFIT 501 (C)3 CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION

Idaho Conservation Community,

As our community responds to The Trident Holdings scheduled presentation to the Idaho's State Board of Land Commissioners on July 21st, the Payette Land Trust encourages everyone to increase their awareness and education of the Endowment Trust.

For over 25 years, PLT has been and will continue to seek solutions which lead to the permanent conservation of as much undeveloped land around the lakes, tributaries and rivers in our Basin as possible. Our guiding document in this effort is "The Payette River Basin Initiative" which can be found here <http://www.payettelandtrust.org/payette-river-basin-initiative/>

We feel it is paramount for everyone, including ourselves, to be knowledgeable on the purpose and scope of Endowment Lands. Without understanding the constitutional entanglements the Land Board must consider when evaluating land use, it will be extraordinarily difficult to develop a workable solution that permanently conserves Endowment Lands around McCall.

It is important to recognize that Endowment Lands are different from federally owned public lands, BLM lands or state parks. Endowment lands are constitutionally mandated to be managed in such a way that they maximize long-term financial benefit to Idaho's public school system, public universities, state hospitals, veterans homes and other public institutions. More information can be found here: <https://www.idl.idaho.gov/about-us/land-board/>

Having worked directly on this challenge for over a year, we can honestly say this is an extraordinarily complex and complicated issue. PLT will continue to educate ourselves on this issue and are very interested in hearing Trident Holdings' official proposal to the Land Board on July 21st.

Sincerely,



Craig Utter, Executive Director



309 E. Lake Street
McCall, ID 83638

PHONE (208) 634-4999
EMAIL info@payettelandtrust.org
WEBSITE Payettelandtrust.org



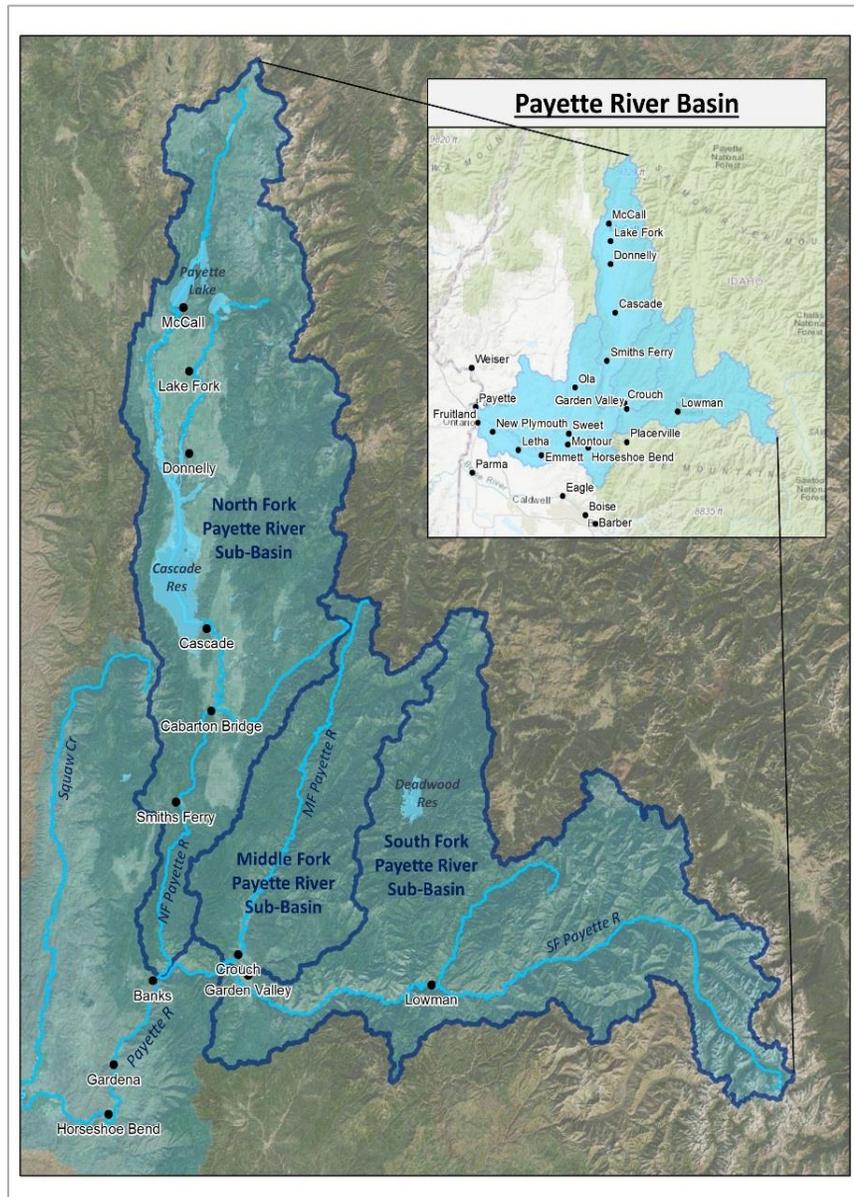
Payette River Basin Initiative

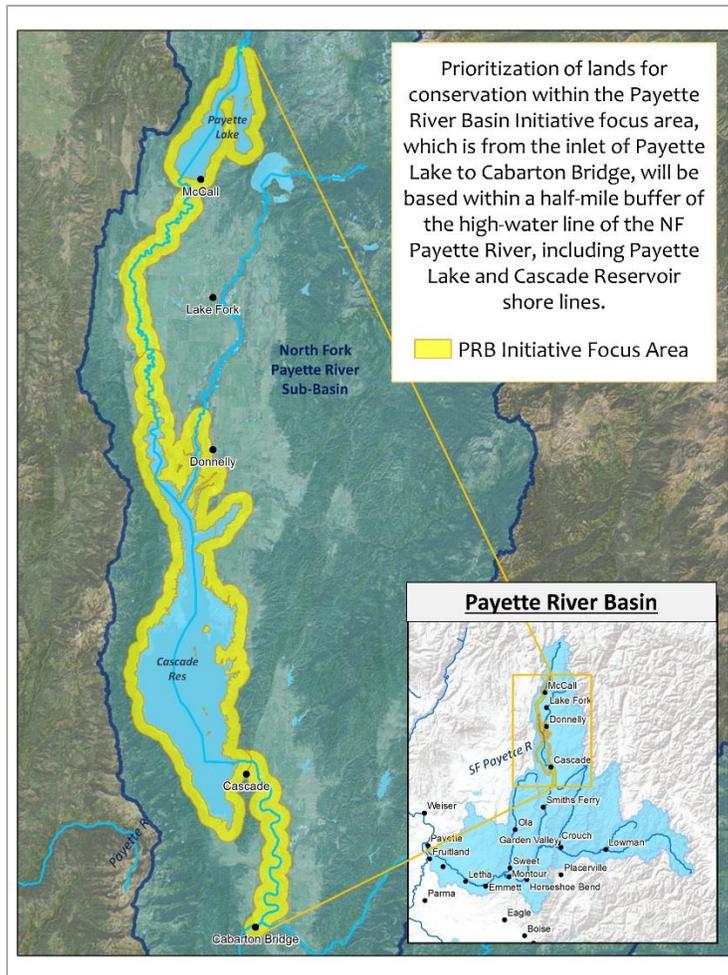
Purpose

The purpose of the Payette River Basin (PRB) Initiative is to utilize conservation easements in permanently conserving portions of land which hold natural, recreational, agricultural and hydrological water resource value. The PRB initiative hopes to receive and focus local, regional and national resources to accomplish this goal. The waterways, lakes, and wild country within and around the basin has drawn people to the area for generations and with increased use, development is inevitable. The Payette Land Trust (PLT) has long understood the importance of the Basin to the area's quality of life, economic viability, unique natural beauty and the importance to the State's water quality. The PLT will strive to keep the land in private ownership and provide the opportunity for public access through agreements with willing private landowners.

Goal

The Goal of the PRB initiative is to permanently conserve a connected corridor from the Payette Lake inlet to Cabarton Bridge along the main stem of the North Fork Payette River. This effort will allow for access, recreation and movement of both people and wildlife within the corridor, while conserving the existing natural beauty and water quality.





Payette Land Trust: What We Believe

The PLT believes in conserving the rural landscape of west central Idaho for the benefit of our community and future generations. We promote a community ethic that values and conserves its working agricultural properties and timberlands in balance with thoughtful development. We envision dedicated areas of open access and connectivity encouraging people to take part in their environment. We believe in maintaining the region's pristine rivers, streams, meadows and lakes for present and future generations.

Compatibility with the 2018 Valley Co. Comprehensive Plan (VCCP)

The PRB Initiative goals overlap substantially with those of the 2018 Valley County Comprehensive Plan (VCCP)¹. Chapters 4, 6 and 10 of the VCCP describe Valley County priorities related to Natural Resources, Special

Areas and Sites, as well as Recreation and Open Space. The plan also recognized that findings have shown the overall water quality in Valley County, Lake Cascade and Payette Lake have been declining. The PLT believes the initiative can be a component in addressing this issue.

Goals of the VCCP which align with the PRB Initiative are as follows:

- Conserve and manage groundwater and surface water in all its forms in order to prevent depletion or pollution
- Protect fish and wildlife as natural resources of critical importance to Valley County
- To recognize the water bodies and waterways in Valley County as special areas
- To recognize important wildlife habitats
- To promote and support a viable recreation and tourism program that is in harmony with the Land Use section of this plan
- To promote and support acquisition and protection of open space that is in harmony with the Land Use section of this plan
- To promote and support acquisition and protection of our trail systems and recreation sites

¹ <http://www.co.valley.id.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2018-Compilation-online-2.pdf>

Objectives of the VCCP which align with the PRB Initiative are as follows:

- Encourage open space buffers adjacent to rivers and creeks in order to preserve riparian areas
- Promote agricultural practices which protect and improve water quality and the expansion of those practices
- Protect the recreation value of the County's water bodies and water courses
- Preservation, protection, and enhancement of wildlife and fish and their migration corridors
- Encourage formation of a citizens group to develop a specific plan for the North Fork of the Payette River between Payette Lake and Lake Cascade
- Work with local, state and federal agencies to provide improvements to waterways within the county
- Encourage new developments to provide and maintain on-site developed recreational facilities, parks, greenbelts, pathways, or open space
- To promote clustering of structures in new developments so as to preserve open space while allowing density
- To consider purchase of easements and property that is key to our recreation access points
- To communicate with land trusts

Payette River Basin Overview: Described in the 1999 Idaho State Water Comprehensive Plan

The Payette River is a major tributary to the Snake River, draining a 3,320 square mile watershed in west-central Idaho. Approximately 4,000 stream miles delineate the basin. Three major branches, the North, Middle, and South forks, conveying water from the mountainous headwaters, converge at the southwestern edge of the Idaho batholith to form the Payette River. The estimated amount of water entering the basin each year as precipitation is about 5.3 million-acre feet. The amount leaving the basin as the annual flow volume of the Payette River at Payette is 2.2 million acre-feet.

Major industries are agriculture (farming and ranching), timber, and recreation. Irrigated agriculture mainly occurs in two areas of the basin: the lower Payette Valley below Emmett, and Long Valley between McCall and Cabarton. Smaller valleys have some irrigated agriculture as well. Approximately 33 percent of the basin is considered tentatively suitable for timber harvest.

The basin is characterized by 60,000 surface acres of boatable rivers, lakes, and reservoirs, comprising 9.1 percent of the state total. Five of the sixteen lakes in the state managed for a trophy or quality trout angling experience occur in the Payette River Basin. Winter sports are an important sector of the economy for upper basin communities.

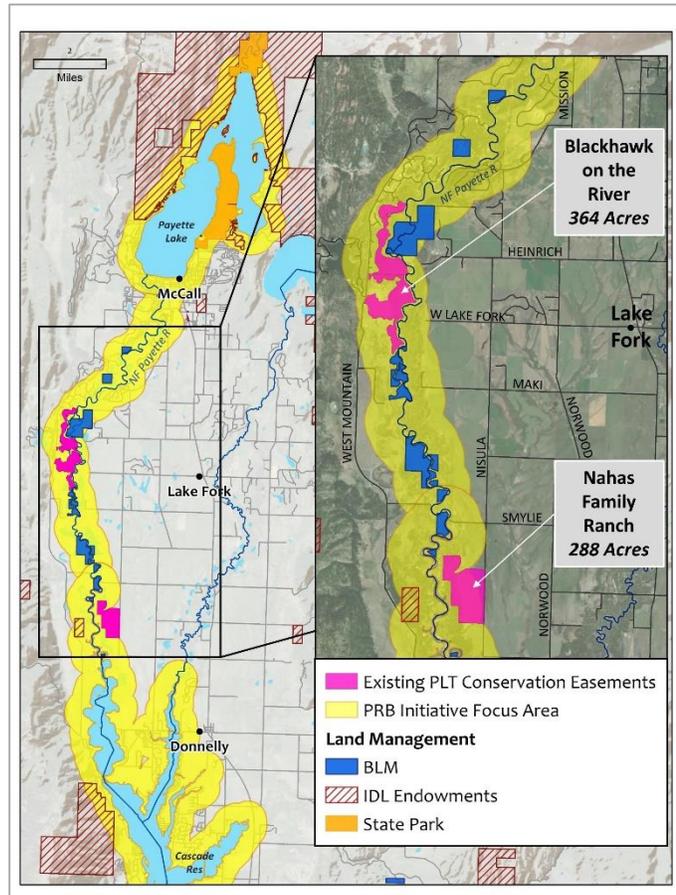
Current Easements within the PRB

In 2006 the PLT and the Nahas family completed its first conservation easement along the North Fork of the Payette River. This conservation easement consists of 288 acres of river front, wetlands, upland grassland and timber. The property remains in private ownership as a working ranch. The PLT then followed in 2007 with an easement on the Blackhawk Development consisting of 364 acres of river front, wetlands and timber.

Current Projects within the PRB

Payette River Access Project

PLT is targeting efforts to connect existing conserved land between Payette Lake and Cascade Reservoir with a focus on providing limited public access to both the water and land. The benefits include partnership opportunities for the Valley County Pathways² and the Payette River Basin Water Trails projects³ while meeting goals with in the 2018 Valley Co. Comprehensive Plan. Currently, the PLT is working with stakeholders and landowners along the corridor to permanently conserve undeveloped portions of the Payette River.



Payette Lake Conservation Project

The PLT is creating a Strategic Plan for permanently conserving the remaining undeveloped portion of Payette Lake located under the McCall Impact Area. The PLT understands the majority of the undeveloped land around the lake is under the ownership of the State of Idaho Endowment Trust and would involve cooperation from the State Board of Land Commissioners. The benefits include permanent public access to the shoreline and the land, water quality protection for the City of McCall and downstream consumers, wildlife movement areas, recreation, hiking and biking trail development, the elimination of land use conflicts within the McCall Impact Area and promote long term economic viability through outdoor recreation⁴. The PLT is currently working with landowners along East Side drive to gain insight and support for the plan.

Conserving Agriculture Heritage within the Basin

The PLT recognizes a significant amount of the working agricultural lands in the Basin reside within a few miles of the Payette River and its tributaries. The PLT is working with Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) through a Farm Bill program to focus efforts on conserving this agricultural heritage⁵.

² <http://www.valleycountypathways.org/>

³ <http://payetteriverwatertrails.com/>

⁴ <https://headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/trends-performance/recreation-counties-attract/#explore>

⁵ <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/id/programs/easements/>

Brief History of Idaho's Endowment Trust Lands



As it was deliberating the Idaho Admissions Act in 1889, the United States Congress displayed uncommon wisdom by granting what would become the Union's 43rd member approximately 3,600,000 acres of land for the sole purpose of funding specified beneficiaries.

The Idaho Constitution was crafted to include Article IX, Section 8, which mandates that the lands will be managed "...in such manner as will secure the maximum long-term financial return to the institution to which [it is] granted."

Chief among the beneficiaries are the public schools, which received two sections of every township in the state (1/18 of the total land base). Beneficiaries of the other funds include the University of Idaho, State hospitals for the mentally ill, Lewis-Clark State College, State veterans homes, Idaho State University, the Capitol Commission, Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind, and Idaho's juvenile corrections system and prison system.

The prescribed income is generated in a number of ways: the sale of land; the sale of timber; leases for grazing, farming, conservation, commercial buildings, recreational homesites, and mining; and earnings from invested funds. The Endowment Fund Investment Board is charged with managing the invested revenues from the endowment lands.

Management activities on state endowment trust land are not intended to benefit the general public, but are directed solely to the good of the beneficiaries of the original land grants. Money generated from the management of these lands is deposited into the earnings reserve fund from which the costs of management and payments to the beneficiaries are made. Revenue from mineral royalties is deposited into the permanent endowment fund. Both the earnings reserve and permanent fund are invested by the Endowment Fund Investment Board. The investment return is distributed to the beneficiaries. Land sale revenue is deposited into the land bank and is available to purchase other land. If not expended for that purpose within five years, the land sale revenue is deposited into the permanent fund.

Management of endowment trust lands is entrusted to the State Board of Land Commissioners. The Idaho Department of Lands is the administrative arm of the Board and carries out the executive directives of the Board to meet the constitutional trust mandate.

Until 1968, it was limited to a "buy-and-hold" investment strategy as dictated by the original legislation that created the fund. Subsequent constitutional amendments approved in 1968 and 1998, enabled the board to take advantage of all the modern investment tools available to it. As a result, the fund's assets rose dramatically — from \$77 million when the board was created to more than \$1.4 billion today — with a corresponding increase in the financial resources available to the beneficiaries.