Investing in the Future of Whitefish – Drinking Water, Wildlife Habitat, and Outdoor Recreation

Whitefish Feasibility Research – September 15, 2014
Conserving Land for People

The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

TPL Mission Statement

Over 340 staff working in 30 offices in three regions
TPL Conservation Services

Conservation Vision
50 communities to date

Conservation Finance
400 measures over $35 Billion

Conservation Transactions
4,000 projects over $5 Billion FMV

Park Design & Development

Conservation Research & Education
50+ publications
Conservation Funding Options – Overview

- Where do we stand?
- Threats and Opportunities: Haskill Basin
- Funding quilt for protection
- Options for investing in Haskill Basin
- Other Montana efforts
- Key questions for funding success
- Next steps & timeline
Where We Are and What We Know

Haskill Basin Project Ranked as Top Priority in Budget
The project seeks to protect more than 3,000 acres in Haskill Basin near Whitefish
BY MOLLY PREDOY 0 MAR 11, 2014 # NEWS & FEATURES

Haskill Basin Project Open House Planned
Efforts to preserve 3,000 acres of Whitefish land discussed at June 17 meeting
BY TRISTAN SCOTT 0 JUN 10, 2014 # LATEST HEADLINES, OUTDOORS

The proposed protection of land and water in Whitefish’s Haskill Basin is moving forward with broad support, and city officials will update the public on the conservation project’s progress at a June 17 meeting.
What’s at Stake?

- Residential development is occurring
- Threat of more development
- Development of Haskill Basin could affect:
What’s at Stake?

Further development of Haskill Basin could affect

• 75% of the Whitefish’s water supply
What’s at Stake?

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- Important viewsheds
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• Trail connectivity plans
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• XC ski access
What’s at Stake?

Further development of Haskill Basin could affect

- 75% of the Whitefish’s water supply
- Critical wildlife habitat
- Important viewsheds
- Trail connectivity plans
- XC ski access
- Whitefish’s recreation economy
Reliable process for successful ballot measures

1. Feasibility Research
2. Public Opinion Survey
3. Program Recommendations
4. Ballot Language
5. Campaign
Feasibility Research

- Funding quilt
- Conservation options
  - GO Bonds
  - Resort Tax
  - Revenue Bonds
  - Water Rates
  - Property Tax
  - Water District
- Election analysis
### General Obligation Bond – option #1

20-year Bond Issues at 3% Interest Rate

2015 Taxable Value for Open Space Bonds = $22,873,171

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bond Issue Size</th>
<th>Annual Debt Svce</th>
<th>Mill Levy Increase</th>
<th>Cost/ Year/ Avg. House*</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$1,025,000</td>
<td>$68,896</td>
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*Median home assessed value = $175,000; taxable value = $4,323

Sources: FY15 Adopted Budget, p13 & City Mgr AV estimate.
Resort Tax – option #2

- Whitefish resort tax is 2%
- Only jurisdiction of the eight <3% maximum
- Increase from 2% to 3% = $1 million/year
### Revenue Bond Debt Service Estimates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Debt Issue</th>
<th>Interest Rate</th>
<th>Term/Years</th>
<th>Annual Debt Service</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$3,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>$3,000,000</td>
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</table>
Water Rates – option #3

- 10% water rate increase = $249,000/year
- With low-interest State water fund loan, City could secure $3 million+ revenue bond

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Debt Issue</th>
<th>Interest Rate</th>
<th>Term/Years</th>
<th>Annual Debt Service</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>$2,000,000</td>
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<td>$3,750,000</td>
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## Estimated Revenue & Costs of Property Tax Increase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mill Levy Increase</th>
<th>Value of One Mill</th>
<th>Annual Revenue</th>
<th>Cost / Avg. House*</th>
<th>Cost / $100K House</th>
<th>Cost / $200K House</th>
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<td>$65</td>
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</table>

Median home assessed value = $175,000; taxable value = $4,323

Sources: FY15 City Budget, & City Manager.
Local Water Quality District – novel option

• 1991 authority to protect, preserve & improve surface/ground water quality
• Annual fee on all property using water or producing waste
• Pros and Cons
Local Montana conservation success since 1998
Key questions for funding success

- Jurisdiction
- Funding Mechanism
- Amount (and duration)
- Voter Support/Tax Tolerance
- Purposes/Uses of Funds
- Timing (choice of election date)
- Management/Accountability elements
Public opinion survey

- Determine support for funding land conservation
- Test voter priorities/benefits
- Sample ballot language
- Understand tax tolerance
- Fiscal safeguards, accountability elements
- Find out best messengers & messages
Next Steps

• Conduct public opinion survey in January 2015
• Survey data determines
  • If this is the right year and election
  • Proper funding mechanism
  • Best ballot language & messaging
  • Proper amount