



Montana  
Native  
Plant  
Society

*To observe - conserve - educate*

P.O. Box 8783 Missoula, MT 59807

8 April 2005

The Honorable Max Baucus  
511 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Baucus,

We am writing on behalf of the 500 members of the Montana Native Plant Society, an organization dedicated to preserving, conserving and studying the flora of Montana and educating the public on the values of the native flora and its habitats. We are concerned about the future of the Swan Valley and potential sale of Plum Creek properties in the area.

The Swan Valley has many biological values. Chief among these are the spectacular diversity of lakes, ponds, sloughs, marshes and fens. Nowhere in the Northern Rockies are there more sylvan wetlands than here. The Swan Valley also has many populations of rare and endangered plants, including the largest metapopulation of the federally listed water howellia known in the world. Several other species of rare plants, such as yellow lady's-slipper, round-leaved orchis, northern bog clubmoss, buckler fern and slender cottongrass, are also associated with Swan wetlands. In addition, the Swan Valley also supports good examples of mesic old-growth forest.

Critical areas of the Swan Valley should be protected from degradation if at all possible. As you know, private lands in the Swan are threatened by residential subdivision and old growth logging. Plum Creek Corporation has offered another portion of its Swan Valley timberlands for sale to the public. We support the U.S. Forest Service request for a \$10.6 million appropriation from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. One of the sections proposed for acquisition (T19N R17W S1) has a great diversity of wetlands and is known to support colonies of water howellia. We also support the State of Montana's request for \$6.6 million from the Forest Legacy Program. This money will go to protecting wetlands, especially in two sections (T23N R17W S 21, 33). These wetlands provide diverse habitat for hydrophytic plants and may support colonies of water howellia or be appropriate for introductions in the future.

The Montana Native Plant Society recognizes that our congressional delegation has played an important role in securing funds to purchase lands in the Swan Valley and we urge you to continue the good work. We hope you will expedite the proposed acquisitions of Plum Creek lands and help preserve the Swan's unique biological heritage for future generations.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Kuropat  
President

Peter Lesica  
Conservation Chair