

Seeley Lake Community Council  
January, 2007

## The Land

The Upper  
Blanchard Meadows



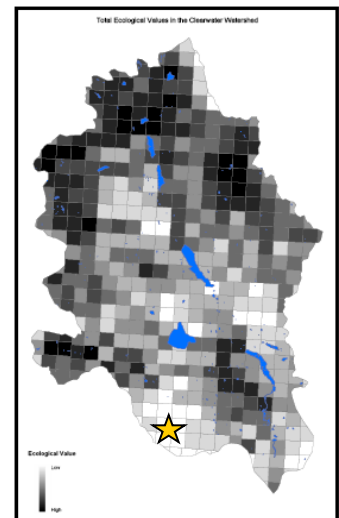
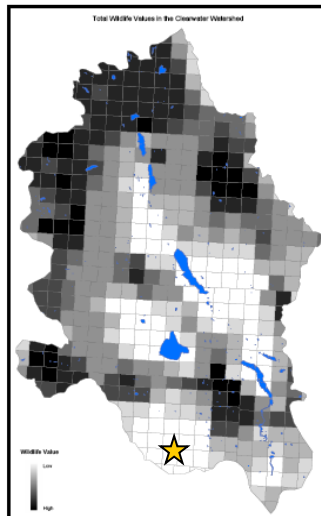
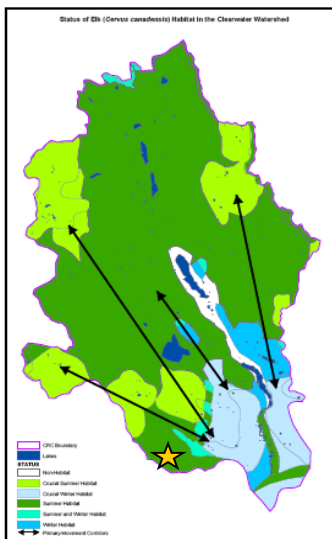
Clearwater Junction

This map of the area shows the Upper Blanchard Meadows as being geographically similar to the area surrounding Clearwater Junction. The yellow and green areas designate areas where the soil is of *local* and *state* importance. In addition, they are both meadow areas. The map clearly shows that the Upper Blanchard Meadows are geographically different than the immediately surrounding area.

We ask that Land Use decisions be made upon land topography and use rather than based upon the nearest neighbor or spot zoning.

## Ecological Values

These three maps which were created for the Clearwater Resource Council show that the Upper Blanchard Meadows are not critical to elk habitat nor migration, wildlife, or the ecological value of the area. The Upper Blanchard meadows are shown as ★. Dark squares indicate high value areas.



## History of Land Use



The Upper Blanchard Meadows were developed by the Jameson family in the 1880's!

The Troutwine family has worked the Upper Blanchard Meadows since 1919 as a cattle ranch.

Marvin looking towards south.  
Photo taken 20+ years ago, before area was logged.

### As a cattle ranch



### As a home



Having been a ranch for about 120 years, in such a remote area, it has been necessary to rely on one's own resources for survival. Before 4 wheel drive trucks were invented, horses were used for transportation; to clear the 7 mile road of snow, as well as for pulling the hay wagon. We've ranched and lived *off the grid* for all these years.

Not surprisingly, due to the years of use, and the need to be self-reliant, there has been some *wear and tear* on the land. It is not pristine. As society has become increasingly aware of the need to protect the land, so has the Troutwine family. It is our intention to make use of current knowledge to protect the land even more than in the past while continuing to operate as a ranch. We want to preserve the beauty of the ranch as much as everyone else here today.

## Recommendations

The challenges to survival of ranches and wildlife are changing, and we ask for support in adaptation to these changes so that agriculture and natural resources will both have a bright future.

Based on geographical landscape, the desire to honor ecological value and support sustainability of agriculture, we recommend:

1. Creation of *new* land use classifications which support housing on parcels of 20 acres. Continued agriculture will continue to be supported by State regulations. There is need for language which supports accompanying dwellings.

Apply this new category to the Upper Blanchard Meadows as well as to other appropriate areas in Missoula County.

There is much to support treating the Upper Blanchard Meadows differently than the immediate surrounding area because it *is* different ~

- It has been developed agricultural land for over a hundred years.
  - It *already* has parcels ranging in size from 20 to 200 acres in size.
  - It is neither a major wildlife area nor corridor.
  - It is a meadow, with soils have been designated as *soils of local, and state* importance.
  - At approximately 630 acres, it is a large enough area to warrant separate classification. This is not *spot zoning*.
2. Support economic sustainability of agriculture by encouraging profitable specialty farms, environmentally friendly forestry, and needed accessory structures. It's true that State law prevents nuisance regulations which harm agribusiness. Nevertheless, we request Land Use wording and classifications which actually support agribusiness as well as those who work on our farms and ranches by encouraging housing in reasonable proximity to the land.
  3. Support home based businesses which complement the seasonal nature of agriculture and minimize the need to drive to town for work. The Farm Bureau, the Sonora Institute and other organizations are working to promote exactly these recommendations so that agriculture remains viable in this nation.
  4. Encourage use of new technology such that future development of the land has minimal impact. These might include use of solar and wind technologies as well as those yet undeveloped.
  5. Creation of language which deals with complications that arise out of the fact that a section is sometimes less than 640 acres. Since most rural land deeds describe ownership according to sections and "government lots" while most Land Use classifications describe land using

the number of acres, there is potential for ongoing complications throughout the county. Language which deals with these discrepancies will decrease the need for variances, and increase government efficiency.

This is of specific concern for Marvin because his 115 acres divided by 3 children is 38. The largest currently approved category that meets his need is 10 acres.

We aren't planning to cover the ranch with 20 acre parcels, but we do want the ability to have some 20-38 acre parcels around the perimeter of the meadow. We anticipate these parcels being created for family members during probate processes. See attached aerial photo with markings.

It's very unlikely that a developer would want to buy and subdivide the land. The meadow has 3 creeks and a high water table. The cost of upgrading the 7 mile dirt road, putting in power lines and dealing with public opposition is formidable. There is no lake, magnificent vista (area has been logged), nor ski resort. There is much to discourage a developer and little incentive.

Creation of this new category would actually help keep "large landscapes intact and rural lifestyles vital." ~ goal of the *Blackfoot Challenge* as well as the Troutwine family. The *Blackfoot Community Conservation Area* seeks to "develop a working landscape that balances ecological diversity with local economic sustainability. . . while maintaining traditional uses including hunting, recreation, agriculture, and forestry."



We ask for your help - to be able to ranch the land, and to divide it so that each of us, the 3 generations of currently living Troutwines, can inherit a piece of where we came from, who we are – to honor our family, the meadow, and our local cultural heritage. The current 80 acre designation prevents us from doing this.

## Summary

To sustain agriculture *and* protect natural resources, we recommend the following ~

1. Creation of *new* land use classifications which support housing on parcels of 20 acres. Place the Upper Blanchard Meadows into this classification because these meadows:
  - Are geographically similar to the Clearwater Junction and Greenough areas.
  - Have moderate ecological value, though not of critical significance.
  - Have been used similarly to land in the Clearwater Junction and Greenough areas - as a cattle ranch for over 100 years.
  - They are different from the immediate surrounding area which does not have soils or topography which would support agriculture, does not have a long family history, and has always been owned in very large blocks.
2. Inclusion of language which supports continued and new agribusiness.
3. Support of home based businesses.
4. Encourage use of new technologies
5. Clarification of language concerning land which is measured in acres vs. sections.

*Thank you* for considering our recommendations. We have spoken to you as representatives of:

Albert and Frances Troutwine who purchased the Blanchard Meadows 87 years ago.

Earl Troutwine (land owner), and Ida, his deceased wife who have dedicated their lives to the ranch. Earl's daughter Leslie Pringle and family.

Marvin and Olga Troutwine (landowners) who have actively supported the family's ability to *ranch the ranch*. Also their family which includes their adult children; Audrey, Judy, and Bruce as well as their 3 children and 1 grandson.