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## **North Idaho Forests Conserved for Forestry, Wildlife, & Public Access**

Protected lands located at McArthur Lake and Hall Mountain

Bonnars Ferry — Approximately 5,000 acres of productive forests in northern Idaho were recently conserved to benefit local economies, native wildlife, and public access for hunting and recreation.

These forests, half located near Hall Mountain and the other half east of McArthur Lake, were placed under conservation easements in January. The conservation easements were conveyed to the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) through a partnership between Hancock Timber Resource Group (HTRG), The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Forest Service. Conservation easements are voluntary and legally binding agreements that compensate landowners for limiting certain uses, such as development and subdivision, while still retaining private ownership.

“Conservation easements and the Forest Legacy Program keep private working forests working,” said Karen Sjoquist, IDL Forest Legacy Program Coordinator. “The continued use, protection, and sustainability of these forests provide local jobs while protecting the social and environmental values that forests provide.”

“We’ve worked closely and cooperatively with stakeholders including the Idaho Department of Lands and The Nature Conservancy since 2012 to make this project a reality. Today, we celebrate the project’s success. These newly conserved 5,000 acres will leverage adjacent and nearby conservation easements to protect important habitat and travel corridors for wildlife species, especially grizzly bears,” said Scott Ketchum, General Manager of HTRG’s North Inland forest management operation. “Cooperative, thoughtful agreements such as these create wins for all parties involved. They are a vital part of Hancock Timber’s stewardship ethic. Over the past three decades, we have been able to conserve and protect more than 465,000 acres of timberlands through our Sensitive Lands Program—with nearly 30 percent of the protected lands coming under conservation easements like this one. We look forward to more mutually beneficial agreements in the future.”

The conserved lands are located in the Hall Mountain area and within the McArthur Lake Wildlife Corridor, areas of Idaho recognized for scenic beauty, outdoor recreation opportunities and wildlife. By protecting these areas from development, the project allows for on-going forest

management and provides permanent public access for activities such as hunting, hiking and berry picking.

“This project is a win-win for both nature and people in North Idaho,” said Toni Hardesty, State Director for the Conservancy in Idaho. “These lands will continue to provide habitat for native wildlife while also maintaining jobs and providing access to the local communities.”

Funding for the project came through the U.S. Forest Service Forest Legacy Program and from The Nature Conservancy. The program seeks to protect “working forests” – those that support the natural resources economy while protecting water quality, providing habitat, opportunities for recreation and other public benefits.

Janet Valle with the U.S. Forest Service noted, “The Forest Legacy Program is about protecting forest lands that are threatened by conversion to non-forest uses. It’s about helping willing private landowners to maintain and keep their forests in active production—to benefit local economies, and preserve fish and wildlife habitat, clean water and public recreation opportunities.”

Forest Legacy funds originate from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, royalties paid by energy companies drilling for oil and gas on the Outer Continental Shelf. The revenues from the depletion of one natural resource support the conservation of another precious resource – our land and water. Legacy funds are used for forest conservation throughout the United States, and Idaho receives project grants through a nationally competitive process.

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The Idaho Department of Lands administers Idaho’s Forest Legacy Program through the Forestry Assistance Bureau. To date, this program has successfully conserved nearly 98,000 acres of privately owned working forestland. IDL is currently working with other private landowners in the area on the voluntary conservation across 700 acres. In addition, IDL manages more than 2.4 million acres of Idaho endowment lands, for the benefit of endowments, primarily public schools. For more information regarding Forest Legacy, visit <https://www.idl.idaho.gov/forestry/forest-legacy/index.html>.

The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Idaho the Conservancy has conserved and protected nearly 400,000 acres. To learn more: [www.nature.org/Idaho](http://www.nature.org/Idaho).

The Hancock Timber Resource Group, founded in 1985, is a division of Hancock Natural Resource Group, Inc., a unit of Manulife Asset Management Private Markets. Based in Boston, it manages approximately 5.9 million acres of timberland in the United States, Brazil, Chile, Canada, New Zealand and Australia on behalf of investors worldwide. Additional information about Hancock Timber may be found at [www.htrg.com](http://www.htrg.com).

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View from the McArthur Lake East Forest Legacy Project, photo ©The Nature Conservancy.