

CLIMATEWISE IN MISSOULA COUNTY

STRATEGIES FOR PROTECTING OUR LAND, WATER & COMMUNITY

*Developed by local stakeholders in a June 2011 ClimateWise workshop,
convened by the Clark Fork Coalition and its partners.*

RISK FIVE - DECLINES AND DISRUPTIONS IN NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

HOW DOES A CHANGING CLIMATE PUT PRESSURE ON NATIVE SPECIES?

Our wildlife faces many of the same risks that people do from climate change. The difference is that they cannot pack up and leave – especially our mountain wildlife. While some species may shift their ranges to higher elevations and latitudes in response to warming, animals like pika and mountain goat have nowhere to go.

The more we know about the individual needs of native fish and wildlife, the better we can help them be resilient in the face of climate change. Bull trout, for

instance, need clean, cold and connected waters. And, since 95% of all species in Missoula County depend on riparian habitat, efforts to maintain and restore connected, clean waters to help bull trout will benefit a wide range of other fish and wildlife.

Not all species will suffer from climate change. Weeds tend to flourish with disturbance and disruption.

Already Missoula County is battling a growing list of exotics like leafy spurge, spotted knapweed, and new invaders like purple loosestrife and Eurasian milfoil.

STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

SUPPORT LAND USE PLANNING THAT MAINTAINS AND ENHANCES INTACT RIPARIAN, WETLAND AND FOREST HABITATS.

- **IDENTIFY AND PRIORITIZE** the most important habitats to protect according to the following factors: biodiversity, population strongholds, wildlife corridors, ecosystem services, and rare and endangered species.
- **REPLICATE THE BLACKFOOT CHALLENGE MODEL** that brings together different groups to find common ground and achieve conservation goals.
- **RESTORE NATIVE SPECIES** and habitats by reducing the stresses that cause declines and degradation.
- **REINTRODUCE BEAVERS** at high elevations to restore wetlands and improve stream flow.
- **REMOVE INCENTIVES FOR SUBDIVISIONS,** while increasing incentives for conservation of critical habitat. Put in place an impact fee for activities that damage wetlands and riparian areas.

ENHANCE AND MAINTAIN THE DIVERSITY, COMPLEXITY AND CONNECTIVITY OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE WILDLIFE HABITATS.

- **CONTROL AND MONITOR INVASIVE SPECIES.** Regulate nurseries to prevent selling invasive plants. Regulate and inspect boats that could harbor aquatic invasive species like zebra mussels. Improve detection of noxious weeds and alter grazing practices to decrease the spread of weeds. Develop new biocontrols. Protect native plant communities from invasion.
- **PLAN FOR WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY.** Leverage conservation efforts through collaboration between local and regional groups to keep connections and provide corridors. Techniques include: building road crossings for wildlife, conserving blocks of intact habitat, and using planning to promote higher density residential development that maintains surrounding open space.
- **INCORPORATE CLIMATE CHANGE NEEDS** for wildlife in existing planning processes, including the Lolo National Forest Plan and the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Comprehensive Plan.

FOSTER AND MAINTAIN HEALTHY AND WILDLIFE-COMPATIBLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS.

- **INCREASE THE ECONOMIC HEALTH OF THE COUNTY** that leads to stronger, resilient wildlife habitats. For example, work with the Community Food and Agriculture Coalition, which is working to preserve productive agricultural lands from development.

EXPAND AND COORDINATE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH EFFORTS AMONG FOOD GROWERS, THE TOURISM INDUSTRY, ELECTED OFFICIALS, AND THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES.

- **HELP LOCAL FOOD GROWERS** maintain biodiversity, native plants, and riparian habitats, and to reduce sediment runoff and erosion.
- **ENGAGE WITH THE TOURISM INDUSTRY** to maintain fish and wildlife recreational opportunities that attract visitors and support local economies.
- **WORK WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS** to increase funding streams for conservation via taxes, easements, federal funds, and other avenues.
- **LINK THE CONSERVATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE CURRICULUM** for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes with other education efforts.

For more information on the 2011 workshop and strategies, please visit: www.clarkfork.org

