



# United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge  
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NEWS RELEASE  
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## **Fish and Wildlife Service partners with Groups to Purchase Property along Wild and Scenic Missouri River**

Last Month, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, seven conservation organizations and a private individual partnered to acquire a 177 acre private in-holding along the Missouri River within the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge (CMR). The property was acquired from a willing seller who had owned the property for many years. The parcel is surrounded by public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management, Montana State Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, and CMR. The property lies immediately adjacent to Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River as well as the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument. The river front tract consists of 35 acres of prime Missouri River riparian habitat and approximately 142 acres of associated breaks habitat.

According to Refuge Manager, Barron Crawford, the acquisition would not have been possible without the partnership of the conservation groups and a private individual. The private conservation organizations included American Prairie Foundation, American Rivers, Montana Audubon, National Wildlife Federation, National Wildlife Refuge Association, World Wildlife Fund, and Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society. Though each of these organizations have different missions all have the common interest of promoting natural resource conservation and enjoyment of the natural beauty of the Missouri River Breaks and/or the refuge.

The American Prairie Foundation (APF) mission is to create and manage a prairie-based wildlife reserve that, when combined with public lands already devoted to wildlife, will protect a unique natural habitat, provide lasting economic benefits, and improve public access to and enjoyment of the prairie landscape. APF and the Service have collaborated on other acquisition projects involving in-holdings within the refuge boundary. After closing on this property Sean Gerrity President of APF said “Congratulations to the Fish and Wildlife Service on this new addition to the unique and extraordinary assemblage of wildlife habitat which they manage for the public’s benefit.”

American Rivers is the leading conservation organization standing up for healthy rivers so communities can thrive. American Rivers protects and restores America's rivers for the benefit of people, wildlife, and nature. Founded in 1973, American Rivers has more than 65,000 members and supporters, with offices in Washington, DC and nationwide. American Rivers is working to protect our remaining natural heritage, undo the damage of the past and create a healthy future for our rivers and future generations. "Our organization has been working to protect and restore the natural and historic values of the Missouri River for a long time," said Scott Bosse, Northern Rockies Director for American Rivers. "There aren't a lot of opportunities to purchase private in-holdings of this value along our nation's Wild & Scenic rivers. When they come up, you have to seize them."

Montana Audubon mission is to promote the appreciation, knowledge, and conservation of native birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. Montana Audubon works through and with people to identify and conserve vital ecological systems for birds and other wildlife. Montana Audubon uses the best available conservation science for identifying the threats to these ecological systems such as riparian zones, grasslands and forest systems. “Purchasing this important piece

of wildlife habitat within the refuge is fantastic for the CMR, wildlife, and all Montanans,” said Janet Ellis, Program Director for Montana Audubon.”

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) is America's largest conservation organization working with more than 4 million members, partners and supporters in communities across the country to protect and restore wildlife habitat, confront global warming and connect with nature. The NWF mission is inspiring Americans to protect wildlife for our children’s future.

National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) is an independent non-profit organization whose mission is to conserve America’s wildlife heritage for future generations through strategic programs that protect, enhance, and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System and the landscapes beyond its boundaries that secure its ecological integrity. By combining policy, grassroots development and public education objectives, the National Wildlife Refuge Association works to strengthen the ecological integrity of our national wildlife refuges and thus ensure a diverse spectrum of plants and wildlife well into the future. "Charles M Russell National Wildlife Refuge and surrounding lands represent an iconic American landscape that protects some of our most cherished wildlife and wild lands. We're proud to play a role in a diverse public/private partnership that will enhance this natural treasure for the benefit of future generations" said Evan Hirsche, President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is the world’s leading conservation organization working in 100 countries for nearly half a century. With the support of almost 5 million members worldwide, WWF is dedicated to delivering science-based solutions to preserve the diversity and abundance of life on Earth, halt the degradation of the environment and combat global climate change.

Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society is organized to promote the enjoyment and protection of the natural environment through education, activism and conservation of bird habitat. “The Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society has long considered the CMR critical habitat for wildlife in Montana and are pleased to assist in acquisition of this land” said Ruth Vanderhorst.

In addition to the funding the conservation groups provided, a private citizen that has a deep passion for the Missouri River Breaks contributed personally to this cause so this parcel would be protected for the future enjoyment of others that enjoy recreating on the river.

“Without these partners the Service and the American public would have missed out on unique opportunity to protect this parcel for the future enjoyment of all that use the river between the Upper Missouri River National Monument and the refuge” Crawford said. “The Service has wanted to add this in-holding to the refuge for a long time because of its prime location along the river and its rich wildlife resources. This is a wonderful gift to the American people.”

For a copy of a map to insert with the story please contact Barron Crawford at 406-538-8706.

*The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).*