



FAQ

When and why did FTBT start?

FTBT was started in 2001 by a group of people who had been using the trails for years and realized permanent public access to them was not guaranteed. They wanted to find a way to keep the trails open permanently.

Where is the land you're trying to buy? How big is it?

We are working on purchasing land adjoining Herron Park, immediately west of the park. This land contains the trails most heavily used by the public, and is the gateway to Plum Creek, Stoltze, and Forest Service lands that connect to Blacktail Mountain. In 2010 we purchased 40 acres of this land and donated it to Flathead County Parks as an addition to Herron Park. The size of the remaining parcel of land we wish to purchase is 280 acres.

Who currently owns the land?

The Conservation Fund, a national non-profit organization, currently owns the 280 acres. FTBT arranged for them to purchase the land (originally 320 acres) in Fall 2007 to prevent it from being listed for sale on the real estate market. The Conservation Fund is acting as a bridge buyer while FTBT raises the money to purchase and permanently protect public access to the land. The Conservation Fund is not in the business of permanently owning land, and is only acting as a temporary owner – they can't hold it indefinitely.

How much money has been raised so far and how much is needed?

FTBT has developed a strategy to purchase the land in increments of approximately 40 acres. As each increment is purchased, it will be added to Herron Park. In 2010 we purchased the first 40 acres (Phase 1) and added it to Herron Park. We have enough funds to complete Phase 2 (a 44-acre parcel) and are now fundraising for Phase 3, the most important phase yet.

The total amount needed to purchase 280 acres, including interest and operating expenses, is \$1.7 million.

What is the timeline for needing to acquire the land?

We have until September of 2012 to purchase the land.

What happens if you don't raise all the money by then?

We will purchase as much land as possible with the money we've raised by September 2012. If we have not raised enough to purchase all 280 acres by then, and are unable to extend the deadline, The Conservation Fund (TCF) will have to sell the remaining land. They will make every effort to find a "conservation buyer" for the remaining land.

This means that the remaining land could end up with one or more houses on it, but every attempt would be made to find a buyer who respects the conservation values of the land. TCF would also provide an easement so the public could travel through the portion of the land that must be sold. This easement would likely entail a single road in contrast to the multiple, widespread trails that currently fan throughout the property. The public would be restricted to that single road.

Are contributions tax-deductible?

Yes, all contributions to FTBT are tax-deductible since we are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

How is Plum Creek land involved in this project?

Plum Creek has been very cooperative to date. FTBT has been communicating with them since its inception. There is no way to reach Plum Creek land without passing through The Conservation Fund land. There is no way to reach Blacktail Mountain without passing through Plum Creek land.

What is the status of the trail easements on Plum Creek land?

With regard to land near Herron Park, FTBT has an annually renewable permit from Plum Creek to use a short section of trail that connects TCF land to John Chase's land. Mr. Chase's land has a permanent conservation easement on it. This easement includes a permanent trail corridor for Foy's to Blacktail, and he generously welcomes non-motorized recreation on his private property.

With regard to travel all the way to Blacktail, the permanent trail route has yet to be determined. Plum Creek, Stoltze, and FTBT are all working together in good faith to work this route out. Both Plum Creek and Stoltze allow the public to recreate on their land and that policy is not in immediate danger of changing. FTBT's long term strategy is to secure a permanent easement through Plum Creek and Stoltze land so if they eventually sell it (for example, as a housing subdivision) there will be a permanent public corridor through the land.

What is the ultimate goal and ideal outcome for the FTBT project?

The goal is to purchase the remaining 280 acres of TCF land and add it to Herron Park with professionally planned, safe, signed trails throughout the property; and to permanently secure public access to the corridor extending from Herron Park all the way to Blacktail Mountain.

Are there any maps of the area available?

Our website contains general maps. We are working on an updated, user-friendly map of our existing and planned trail system for Herron Park and the 280 acres we're trying to purchase and add to the park.

As to the route to Blacktail, a precise map is not practical or useful at this time because there is more than one way to get there and these routes utilize and intersect various logging roads, the location of which are subject to change or become abandoned without notice. Many of them abruptly dead-end. Eventually the goal is to have a single, designated route extending to Blacktail Mountain but FTBT has other priorities it must focus on at present. You may wish to check a nationally popular website, www.everytrail.com, to see if GPS coordinates showing a current route to Blacktail have been posted.

Bottom line – this is a primitive area; users must assume all responsibility for their own safety and use common sense.

How can I get involved and what are the current needs of FTBT?

To get involved, call 752-3318 or contact one of the board members listed on our website. We are a volunteer-run organization (just one paid part-time administrative assistant) with a wide variety of needs. We always need help at our fundraising/awareness raising events. We need help with generating publicity and adding quality photo content to our website and print materials. We need someone to ensure our kiosks and display areas in businesses are stocked with rack cards and donation envelopes. And we are willing to consider thoughtful, experienced people who will commit time and energy to our board of directors and/or committees.