

FOY'S TO BLACKTAIL TRAILS Front Door Recreation

What makes the Flathead special? Just look out your "Front Door" on an autumn day:

The larches are making the mountain-side glow gold; the sky has the huge, silvery-grey clouds of fall; Flathead Lake is cobalt blue; the Swan Mountains are pristinely clear and in a few weeks the runs of Big Mountain will sparkle with snow.

This "Front Door" view is free for anyone to enjoy less than 10 minutes from downtown Kalispell at Herron Park and the Foy's to Blacktail Trails.

Whether it's a family on a hike, single-track mountain bikers, horseback riders or cross-country skiers, folks of all ages regularly enjoy these trails in the heart of Flathead Valley. Some come for an hour or less, some for an afternoon or evening, while the ambitious use these trails to access the corridor through private and public forestlands extending almost 15 miles to Blacktail Mountain.

What started in 2001 as an idea for maintaining the historic connective trail from Herron Park to Blacktail Mountain, has now become a nonprofit organization, Foy's to Blacktail Trails (FTBT). We now have a plan for a tapestry of trails in the heart of Flathead Valley on 320 acres overlooking Foy's Lake and Herron Park.

FTBT has made remarkable progress toward this lofty goal. In 2007 we arranged for The Conservation Fund to buy the 320-acre parcel before it was put on the open real estate market, and hold it until September 2012 while FTBT raises the \$2.2 million needed to permanently protect access to this treasured place.

What would happen to our families and communities if we could not easily and quickly escape to the comfort of our hiking shoes, sporty bike or old mare – all within 10 minutes of where most of us live and work? Locking this land forever behind gates and no-trespassing signs would be an immeasurable loss.

That "Front Door" could become a closed door. Over and over we have seen our access to forest and trails lost forever because we have failed to plan ahead.

Broadly, FTBT's strategy for securing this land includes:

- Planning for safe, signed trails at the site that can accommodate a wide variety of user groups.
- Phasing purchase of the 320-acre parcel to ensure the most important parts of the property are protected first.
- Working on partnerships encouraging use of this property as a teaching tool for forest stewardship and education.

We can make our vision real. But we cannot do it alone. Help us complete the vision of this historic trail system and ensure outdoor enthusiasts forever have a wild space and quiet place to explore close to home.

Let's not slam the door shut on our future. Join the Front Door Recreation campaign and be a part of Foy's to Blacktail Trails today.