

PROTECTING SPECIAL SITES

Helping Forest Landowners Manage their Forests & Protect Special Sites

Managing in a manner that protects the integrity of the property and takes into account its unique qualities:



Ecological



Geological



Cultural



SPECIAL SITES



Photo courtesy of Brian Sugden

Montana's forestlands have a rich heritage of special sites, which merit informed stewardship during forest management planning and management activities. These special areas may be geologically special – like natural hot springs, or culturally special – like an old ghost town cemetery, or ecologically special – like the rare spruce-skunk cabbage riparian areas.

As part of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) - <http://forests.org> - SFI Program Participants have made the commitment to protect special sites on their forestlands and to assist private forest landowners in protecting special sites as an integral part of their forest management activities.

Goal

Encourage private landowners to protect special sites during forest management activities.

Geologic lands of special significance may include features like natural hot springs, caves, sensitive soil types, bogs, rock formations and other special physical sites. Special geologic sites may also include icons like Pompey's Pillar – the only remaining physical evidence of the Lewis and Clark expedition in Montana - where stunning geology and people have come together to create a unique cultural-physical historical site. Other examples could include Native American buffalo jumps, where the natural topography provided the opportunity for harvesting buffalo. Similarly, special geological features tend to provide special, or rare habitats for wildlife. For example: many species of bats take advantage of caves and some raptors, like peregrine falcons, use steep rock cliffs for nesting sites and bogs are home to many plants growing nowhere else.



Photo courtesy of Flathead National Forest

SPECIAL PROTECTION

Ecological sites of significance include areas of special or rare habitats, which some species of animals and plants need to fulfill their life cycles. These may be unique riparian areas, migration routes, or geologically or climate-limited habitats for specialized creatures and plants. In particular, the SFI Standard requires the conservation of Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value and the rare wildlife and plant species associated with these special forests. These may include critically imperiled and imperiled 'G-1 and G-2' and threatened and endangered species and ecological communities. The Nature Serve section of the Montana Natural Heritage Program web site with help you identify these special sites and wildlife and plant species:

<https://explorer.natureserve.org/Search>



Photo courtesy of Brian Sugden

Montana welcomes private forestland owners in working to identify and protect all types of special sites.

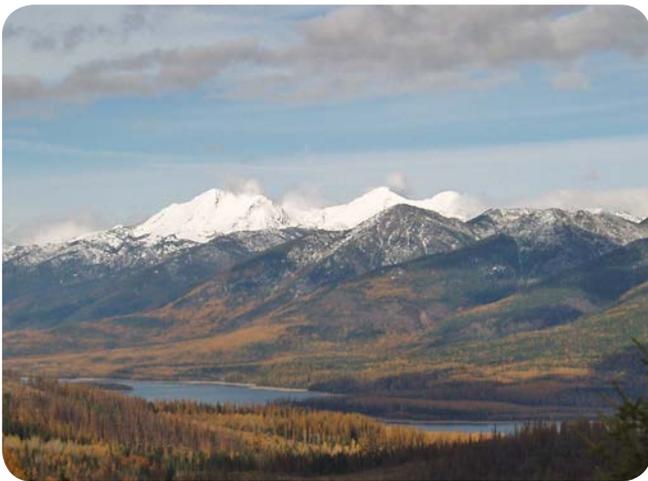


Photo courtesy of Flathead National Forest

Culturally-important sites may include sacred Native American places, as well as petroglyphs, teepee circles, buffalo jumps, isolated graves, old ghost town cemeteries and other areas of historical significance. Again, it is likely that such cultural sites are associated with special geological features, lakes, rivers, and streams, as well as being adjacent to ancient rails and areas of early human settlement. You may also find historical trail markers - usually blazed trees or cairns. Historical roads and trails abound, including the Mullan Road and the Lewis and Clark Trail.

TAKING ACTION

Montana has great online resources for private landowners that will help determine what special sites may be on the property.



<https://nris.msl.mt.gov/>

The **Montana Natural Resource Information System** is an extensive source of natural resource information and a portal to other websites.



<http://gis.mt.gov>

This portal allows you to explore your forestland through the **Cadastral Data Mapping** window, where you can use the property map search feature and access a variety of maps and aerial photographs.



<http://mtnhp.org>

Use the **Montana Natural Heritage Program** to learn about the plants and animals that may be present on your property, including those special places and habitats.



<http://mhs.mt.gov>

For cultural information on your property, visit the **Montana Historical Society**.



<http://www.mbm.mtech.edu>

When you have your property identified, you can then access geological information through the **Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology** website.



<http://dnrc.mt.gov/serviceforestry>

Montana DNRC Service Foresters are a starting point for creating a management plan and incorporating treatments for protecting special sites.



<http://www.msuextension.org/forestry>

Montana State University Extension Forestry is a great resource for forest landowners.

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