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AMERICAN PRAIRIE PURCHASES 73 RANCH

Land acquisition expands habitat base stewarded by organization to more than 450,000 acres

American Prairie is pleased to announce the purchase of the wildlife-rich 73 Ranch, located along the eastern side of the Musselshell River in Garfield and Petroleum Counties. The 32,003-acre property comprises 12,233 deeded acres and 19,770 leased acres, and is situated along the southern border of the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge (CMR). [This latest acquisition](#) brings American Prairie's total deeded and leased property to more than 450,000 acres.

According to Alison Fox, CEO of American Prairie, the acquisition will boost American Prairie's efforts to connect a vast network of existing public lands and will open access to an additional 9,300 acres of public lands that were previously inaccessible.

"We are very excited to add the 73 to the habitat base already stewarded by American Prairie, for the benefit of wildlife and people in perpetuity," said Alison Fox, CEO of American Prairie. "This purchase will further our mission to grow a contiguous habitat area, which is essential to restoring ecosystem biodiversity on the prairie."

The 73 is highly coveted by outdoor users because of its high value wildlife habitat that supports populations of elk, mule deer, pronghorn, turkeys, pheasants, and waterfowl. According to Damien Austin, Superintendent for American Prairie, the nonprofit conservation organization prioritized the purchase to ensure a good conservation outcome and opportunities for increased public access.

"We did not want to lose a rare opportunity to both conserve critical wildlife habitat and be able to share this special place with the public," said Austin. "We negotiated fair market value for the property and will pay property taxes that support our local communities just as we do with all our properties."

According to the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, the acquisition by American Prairie still ensures a good outcome for wildlife and access to the public.

“We support American Prairie’s acquisition given their history of providing public access to sportsmen and sportswomen,” said Scott Laird, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership Montana Field Representative. “American Prairie has a proven record of enhancing public hunting access, and we believe their acquisition of the 73 Ranch will unlock public hunting opportunities for all Montanans.”

Management of the 73

American Prairie intends to produce a public access plan in the next year to spell out recreational uses, including hunting, on deeded acres, and to open the 9,300 acres of state and federal public lands that were previously inaccessible.

“As we’ve done with past land acquisitions, we need to first take time to familiarize ourselves with the property prior to welcoming the public,” said Fox. “We are thrilled to add the 73 to American Prairie, knowing it creates a valuable opportunity to increase access to public lands, and we know recreationists will be eager to explore the property.”

American Prairie’s plan to provide public access to public land that was previously landlocked also drew praise from other hunting and conservation organizations.

“The Montana Chapter of BHA supports any private landowner who conserves quality wildlife habitat and/or opens public access to private land and/or inaccessible public land,” said Jake Schwaller, Eastern Montana Board Member for MT BHA. “As the demand for places to hunt is at an all-time high, we applaud all efforts by private landowners to create new or improved public hunting opportunities.”

"American Prairie's acquisition of the 73 Ranch will secure quality wildlife habitat and yield expanded hunting opportunities for residents of eastern Montana, said Eric Clewis, Montana Wildlife Federation. “This property has a history of being inaccessible to the average Montanan and we strongly support American Prairie's move to restore public access.”

The management plan will include hunting opportunities similar to how American Prairie manages high-quality public hunts on its other wildlife-rich properties such as Blue Ridge, White Rock, and the PN.

While the 73 is being evaluated, American Prairie is proud to offer much of its deeded and leased acres for use by the public for recreation opportunities including hunting, camping, fishing, birding, hiking, cycling and more. That includes more than 69,000 acres of deeded lands enrolled in the Block Management hunter access program managed by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

To date, charitable contributions from prairie advocates in Montana and from around the world have allowed American Prairie to purchase and lease more than 450,000 acres in

Montana's northern plains - one of the remaining places on Earth where it is possible to conserve and restore temperate grasslands at an ecosystem scale.

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About American Prairie

American Prairie's vision is to create a vast and collaboratively-managed prairie destination that serves as a fully functioning ecosystem for wildlife, and offers visitors permanent access to the landscape that shaped our nation's character. Already open to the public for recreation including camping and hunting, American Prairie offers visitors an opportunity to connect with nature on a truly grand scale. Learn more at americanprairie.org.