

Hunters Beware

By Karen Schumacher

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While conservation initiatives and non-governmental organizations (NGO) have been busy targeting land for conservation, it seems they aren't too busy to now target hunters and bring them into their nest.



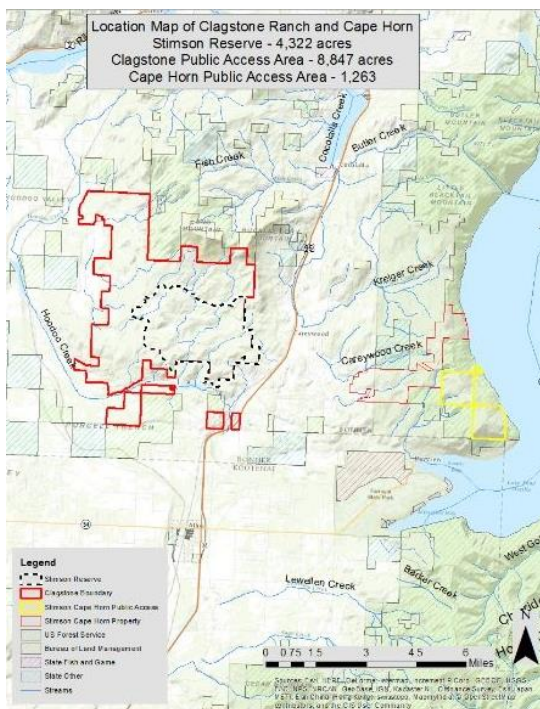
The most explicit example is from the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership ([TRCP](#)). As the title suggests, this is a group for conservation which typically means conserving land for non-use. A couple of things to note about this group. First, it is a [partner](#) with Yellowstone to Yukon ([Y2Y](#)), which is the largest conservation initiative in the west, working to protect habitat and put all land into conservation for restricted use from Yellowstone Park to the Yukon. Secondly, they are putting on a show of support for hunting and opening access to "landlocked public lands". This new tactic includes [partnerships](#) with corporations, NGOs, international organizations, land trusts, and government associations, all with similar conservation objectives. TRCP's call for increasing the number of [hunters](#) is "...because the implications for conservation are dire..."

Starting with their [article](#), onX and TRCP Partner for Landlocked Public Access, these two groups begin with the premise that they will help increase access for hunters on public land. However, instead of meeting with true hunters they chose to meet with "outdoor media, conservation experts and industry leaders". These are the individuals who will be solving the hunter's problem of access? Their [report](#) will be taken to Washington D.C. for lobbying on your behalf. However, before they let you read that report they want information on you, so to spare the reader from this, here is the [report](#), which is nothing more than a lobbying campaign for re-authorizing the LWCF. For those not familiar with the Land and Water Conservation Fund, it is a Department of Interior (DOI) funding [program](#) for conservation and conservation groups, such as [TRCP](#), who are [frightened](#) at the prospect they



may lose this money for implementing their conservation goals. While the [fund](#) was originally intended for recreational access, it has become a money trough for federal acquisition of land and NGO conservation objectives, even Rep. [Bishop](#) recognizes this. What better way to correct this injustice than to initiate a Madison avenue advertising campaign that lures hunter support with a veiled ruse of supporting access to hunting. The LWCF is due to sunset at the end of September this year which is why this rubbish is being pursued so aggressively.

In the article there is reference to a "checkerboard" of land ownership and that statement is significant for the plans being laid on how you will be allowed to hunt. Among other groups, [Y2Y](#), Western Governors' Association ([WGA](#)), and Sec. [Zinke](#) are all in on the push to create wildlife corridors, which are often designated as [protected](#) land. In order to pursue their corridor objectives they must first resolve the checkerboard of land ownership which means, as much as possible, purchasing private land for conservation easements, which, as Rep. Bishop states, often ends up in [federal](#) hands. [Corridors](#) are used for linkage between protected areas such as national parks, forests, or wilderness areas for "connectivity". One egregious example in Idaho was the Stimpson Lumber conservation easement purchase, Clagstone [Meadows](#). This land, in which [Y2Y](#) was involved, was purchased for linkage between protected areas and is now state owned land.



TRCP defines "landlocked" land as "...federally managed lands that cannot be accessed directly from a public road (direct access) and cannot be accessed via adjoining public land by way of a public road (indirect access)." That means in their checkerboard scenario private land is the barrier. Case in point, the article states after analyzing public land data, they determined that access to public land is often inaccessible due to private land as a case in Montana was mentioned. It states they viewed "...a large swath of public land that, due to a strip of private land along the road, is wholly inaccessible to the public." In their scheme, if that private land could be placed into a conservation easement the public land would then be accessible. At least they were

honest in identifying who would unlock that land, "...conservation groups and public land management agencies...". They are giving a dubious impression that suddenly there would be access to public land by conservation easements on private land.

The Landscape Conservation Cooperative Network ([LCCN](#)) states their work is "...to identify the best places to target conservation and land protection proposals to provide recreational access for hunters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts." How does conserved or protected land provide access? In reality it doesn't. Other conservation groups such as the High Divide [Collaborative](#) are vested in wildlife conservation with "landscape conservation design" methods, and it isn't for hunting access. It is about conserving land for more controlled, restricted, or banned use and any hunter can testify to the fact their access to hunting is being dramatically reduced and more difficult to access. Hopefully this explains why.

According to the National Conservation Easement Database (click on [Idaho](#)), the majority of easements are held by the state, federal government, and NGOs with over 50% having closed access.

Representation by elected officials was the way in which hunting used to be managed through legislation and statutes that determined how state agencies operated. Now those agencies are driven by special interest groups and corporations with no representation of Idaho hunters.

While there is a plethora of other information regarding this issue, the message here is hunters beware. This media blitz by TRCP is nothing more than a covert way in which to make you believe they are advocating for you to increase access on public lands, but is really about using you to support their soon to end, taxpayer funded money stream for their conservation objectives which includes more land placed into conservation and turned over to federal and state hands. None of this increases access but rather contributes and accelerates continued limitations for hunting.