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► U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service purchase

Refuge land to be preserved

By Tribune Staff

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said this week that it, along with seven conservation organizations, worked with a private individual to purchase a 177-acre private in-holding within the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge along the Missouri River.

The property was acquired from a willing seller who owned the property for many years. The parcel is surrounded by public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management, Montana State Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, and the CMR refuge.

Bill Berg, deputy project leader for the refuge, said the property owner and the private buyer chose to remain anonymous.

The property lies immediately adjacent to the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River as well as the Upper Missouri



River Breaks National Monument.

It is west of U.S. Highway 91 and north of the river.

The riverfront tract consists of 35 acres of prime Missouri River riparian habitat and approximately 142 acres of associated breaks habitat.

Refuge Manager Barron Crawford said the acquisition



RICK GRAETZ PHOTO/COURTESY USFWS

This photo taken half a mile downstream from the property acquired by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for inclusion in the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge shows the type of habitat that makes up the land.

would not have been possible without the partnership of the conservation groups and a private individual. The conservation organizations participating in the sale were the American Prairie Foundation, American

Rivers, Montana Audubon, National Wildlife Federation, National Wildlife Refuge Association, World Wildlife Fund and Yellowstone Valley Audubon

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Society.

Crawford said that while each of the organizations has a different mission, all have the common interest of promoting natural resource conservation and enjoyment of the natural beauty of the Missouri River Breaks and/or the refuge.

"Without these partners, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the American public would

have missed out on an unique opportunity to protect this parcel for the future enjoyment of all that use the river between the Upper Missouri River National Monument and the refuge," Crawford said. "The service has wanted to add this in-holding to the refuge for a long time because of its prime location along the river and its rich wildlife resources. This is a wonderful gift to the American people."