



STATE OF WYOMING: GRAND CANYON OF THE BLACK HILLS

The USDA Forest Service Forest Legacy Program (FLP) enabled the State of Wyoming to permanently protect 4,714 acres of scenic canyonlands on the western edge of the Black Hills National Forest in partnership with nonprofits, including the National Wild Turkey Federation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and The Nature Conservancy. The acquisition enhances public access to and management of 1.2 million acres of national forest, protects valuable water resources and supports habitat.

The Black Hills is a unique ecoregion where four biomes (Eastern Deciduous Forest, Western Coniferous Forest, Boreal Forest, and Northern Mixed Grass Prairie) converge. This convergence leads to a mix of plant and animal life not found elsewhere. With 480

foot cliff habitat intermixed with pine and riparian hardwood forest, the Grand Canyon of the Black Hills provides habitat to a wide array of wildlife, especially bats, songbirds, and raptors. In the arid west, water resources are particularly valuable, and the property is rich in hydrologic and riparian features.

An internationally renowned tourist destination, the Black Hills region faces intense pressure from residential buyers. The landowner had developed a subdivision master plan that would have fragmented the property, but upon seeing PBS's "The National Parks: America's Best Idea," he sought a conservation option. Had FLP not enabled the State of Wyoming to make the purchase, the property would have been sold on the open market. Residential development would have extended the wildland-urban interface 15.5 miles into a canyon where firefighting is difficult and expensive.



The Grand Canyon of the Black Hills provides habitat for the **threatened northern long-eared bat, black-backed woodpecker**, and 143 other species of greatest conservation need, including **northern goshawk, least weasel, and smooth green snake**.

The acquisition of the Grand Canyon of the Black Hills supports strategic initiatives of the State of Wyoming and partners, including nonprofits that have identified the property as a focus area for conservation. The State of Wyoming's "Connect People to Forests" initiative is supported through the protection of the property's public access values. The acquisition complements adjacent public lands by connecting 7,313 acres of an outlying parcel of

USDA Forest Service land to the main body of the Black Hills National Forest. This creates a protected landscape that extends 43 miles across both South Dakota and Wyoming, including a 22-mile shared boundary with the Black Hills National Forest.

The forest products industry is the largest employer in Crook County, accounting for 25% of employment. The largest employer is a timber mill with an annual output of 40 million board feet (MMBF). As part of the historic Moskee Ranch, the project lands have been managed for timber for nearly a century. Ensuring the project lands continue to be maintained as working forest is critical to the continued success of the local forest products industry.



Forest products are valued at **\$200 million** annually. The Black Hills account for **45%** of the statewide timber harvest in Wyoming.



AT-A-GLANCE



16.7 miles of perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral streams, 5 major springs, 2 reservoirs.



28 acres of riparian habitat, 8 acres of wetlands, 9 acres of montane ferns.



The property is **90% forested**. Ponderosa pine, the principal timber species, comprises **95%** of forest cover.



Employs **1,400 people** and provides **\$120 million** in salaries and contractor payments.



Travel and tourism provided **350 jobs** and generated **\$29.3 million** 2013.



Provides habitat for **63 birds, 30 mammals, 8 reptiles, 4 amphibians, & 38 plants** identified as Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Top L: Canyon provides striking views for visitors traveling along the county road. (Photo: Wyoming Game and Fish Department); **Bottom L:** Commanding view of the property and county road from the Natural Arch. (Photo: Toni Kahnke); **Middle R:** 480 foot limestone cliffs provide valuable habitat for bats and raptors. (Photo: Wyoming State Forestry Division)

For more information, visit

<https://wsfd.wyo.gov/forestry-assistance-programs/wyoming-forest-legacy-program>.