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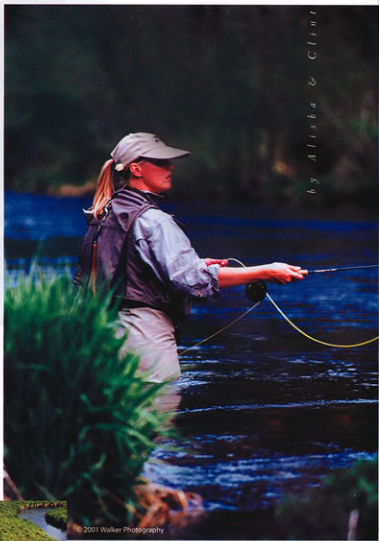
CAST AWAY YOUR CARES

Fly-fishing properties offer an easygoing lifestyle that promises to hook you in

IT'S NOT UNCOMMON TO FIND PEOPLE CONSIDERING a move to the serene Rocky Mountains in search of a richer, fuller life—one void of the hectic pace that's increasingly prevalent in most urban towns. Thanks to the convenience of wireless communication, home can literally be “where the heart is.” For many, that's hip-deep in the blue-ribbon fly-fishing waters of the West: the rivers, creeks and streams that cut through hundreds of unparalleled country miles of fields and meadows, and the pristine mountain lakes set amidst acres of untouched wilderness.

In days gone by, generations of fly-fishers passed secrets of technique and tradition down family lines—the proper way to cast, the right kind of fly and the best position in the water. To be part of the elite circle of skill required supreme dedication and as much a love of the process as a love of the catch. Fly-fishing wasn't what you'd consider a common pastime; it called to a select few who found satisfaction in the quiet challenge of the waters.

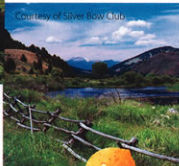
It's been almost a decade since this once elite sport turned into an industry—fueled by Robert Redford's screen adaptation of the book, “A River Runs Through It.” The movie captured the romance and art of fly-fishing so well that anglers of all ages began to



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Courtesy of Glenwild



Courtesy of Silver Bow Club



Courtesy of Garland Homes



Roger Wade photo

flock to the Rockies' renowned waters to learn from the masters. Even today, the popularity continues to rise as people seek out the sport as a way to connect to a simpler life.

After experiencing the meditative peace that comes from quality time spent in the water, many decide that a few days of casting just aren't enough, and look to own their own stretch of a river or creek. Motivations for purchasing fly-fishing property vary, according to Alex Maher, broker/owner of Live Water Properties, a company in Jackson, Wyoming that specializes in such parcels. "I see a lot of baby boomers seeking this type of property," shares Maher. "Some have been fishing for years and are looking for a spot to retire. Others like the idea of giving back to the land and want to foster the waters through conservation efforts. Many have simply been



lured by the romance of the fly-fishing lifestyle."

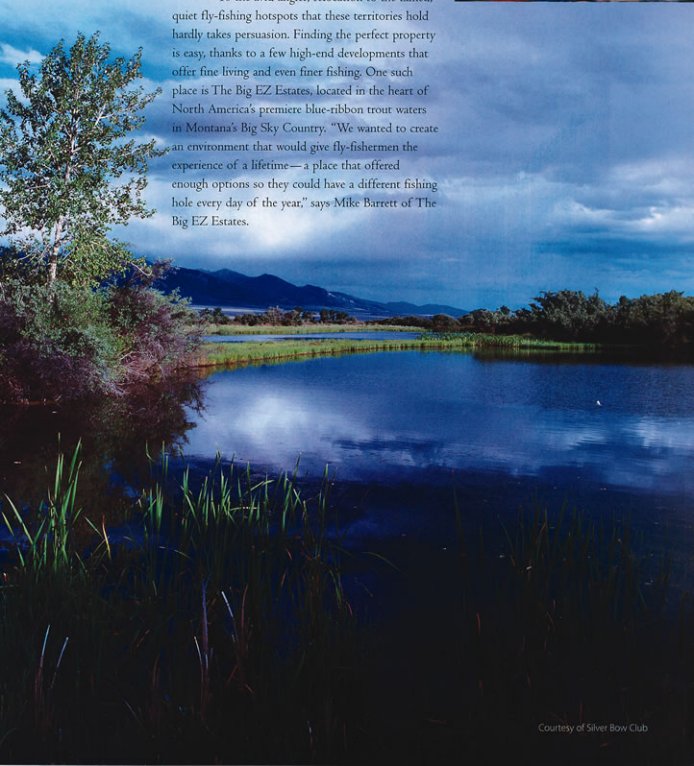
The difference in purchasing a ranch property versus a fly-fishing property, relates Maher, is that the water is not just another feature, like a stand of trees or a mountain view. The rivers and creeks are sophisticated ecosystems, and owners must be prepared to take on the responsibility involved in maintaining the waters as well as the land. For those who want the lifestyle but don't have time to spare, it's possible to hire a "river keeper" to manage the water, just as you would hire a ranch manager to oversee your land. Another option is to purchase fly-fishing property within a development that already has the maintenance staff in place.

After Redford's gorgeous fly-fishing scenes brought attention to the sport, prices of fly-fishing properties went on the rise. These days, shares Maher, buyers can expect to find costs that reflect an area's popularity, quality of fishing, proximity to major cities and amenities, and availability of land. "It's important to analyze each property on its own

merit. For example, you can buy a premium fly-fishing property for around \$2,000 an acre in one area of Wyoming, go one hour in a different direction and find another one for \$14,000 an acre. The key is knowing what you want and finding an experienced broker to help you locate it."

To the avid angler, relocation to the famed, quiet fly-fishing hotspots that these territories hold hardly takes persuasion. Finding the perfect property is easy, thanks to a few high-end developments that offer fine living and even finer fishing. One such place is The Big EZ Estates, located in the heart of North America's premiere blue-ribbon trout waters in Montana's Big Sky Country. "We wanted to create an environment that would give fly-fishermen the experience of a lifetime—a place that offered enough options so they could have a different fishing hole every day of the year," says Mike Barrett of The Big EZ Estates.

Courtesy of Storm Mountain Ranch



Courtesy of Silver Bow Club

The pebble-bottomed beds of the Gallatin and Yellowstone rivers beckon enthusiastic anglers with the possibility of landing the perfect trout. Within a short drive are extraordinary fishing opportunities on the Madison and Jefferson rivers, as well as the numerous streams, ponds and lakes that surround the development's sculpted land. All in all, resident anglers may find themselves on any of four famed nearby rivers during the day and then have the opportunity to take advantage of the two fully-stocked trout ponds on The Big EZ premises for a peaceful evening on the water.

Twenty estate properties sit nestled on the northern Rocky mountainside less than a scenic hour's drive from Bozeman, with prices ranging from approximately \$400,000 to \$775,000. Along with panoramic views from each of the vast 20-acre homesites and the unlimited fishing opportunities, residents can make reservations to access the upscale amenities offered by The Big EZ Lodge.

An award-winning five-star quality facility, the nearby Lodge offers a home-like environment with a western flair. Its one-of-a-kind, par-72 championship putting course gives Estate owners a chance to practice their short game, the "Montana-sized" outdoor hot tub provides perfect comfort after a day on the water, and the Lodge's chefs are known for their ability to whip up the area's finest wild game specialties. For residents who need a peaceful place to conduct business, the Lodge provides first-class corporate meeting facilities with spacious work areas and T-1 Internet access, state-of-the-art audio/video equipment, a boardroom with seating for 12, as well

as a Big Idea room large enough to seat 26. With both outstanding fly-fishing opportunities and high-end amenities like the Lodge, The Big EZ Estates is the perfect catch for those interested in experiencing the best of all worlds.



Just outside Steamboat Springs, Colorado is Creek Ranch, another exceptional fly-fishing community offering first-class waters. Managing partners and local ranchers Brent and Robin Romick have made a commitment to the protection and enhancement of Creek Ranch's 3.1 miles of Trout Creek as well as the ranch land and wildlife. "Creek Ranch represents a labor of love and respect for the land and its inhabitants. Use of the next century's development techniques has ensured man, livestock, wildlife, fish and our feathered friends cannot only co-exist, but flourish," relates Brent Romick.





Although Romick & Associates was free to develop 62 lots on their 1,708 deeded-acre ranch, only 39 homesites (ranging in size from five to 16 acres) will be available given their pledge to low density. Aside from the spacious properties, owners will have plenty of room to roam with 2,400 acres total including the adjacent state and BLM land. On top of that, 75 percent (1,280 acres) of the deeded property has been dedicated as open space. Architectural controls and sensitive building covenants will keep homes in tune with their surroundings. Homestead prices run from about \$300,000 to \$450,000.

Wonderful trails for horseback riding and cross-country skiing, as well as hunting grounds on the premises, offer residents year-round activities. But for the angler, the highlight is the fishing. Final riparian plantings have recently been completed on Creek Ranch's trout stream, which has been honored with the Excellence in Riparian Management Award from the Colorado Riparian Association. Three separate lakes allow owners premium lake fishing, and the development's river keeper makes sure all the waters are always in prime condition.



Courtesy of Troy Brookshire,
Colorado Group Realty

What sets Creek Ranch apart is its real ranch lifestyle. As Brent Romick has been quoted in the past, "We're all about rods and ropes, not clubs and cashmeres." Creek Ranch is for purists—those looking to get away and experience incredible fly-fishing opportunities within a genuine working ranch environment.

Whether it's the love of the sport or the romance of the lifestyle that brings you to the Rocky Mountains, fly-fishing properties are the perfect place to see the land at its glory. A location where catching a glimpse of dawn's first slanted rays through the crowns of the trees unveils quiet deer, chirping robins and swift moving streams. Where several rich, long hours on a stretch of water so clear and cool—running with 'bows and cuts, bulls and browns—can be enjoyed and savored for years to come. ♦

Photos on this page courtesy of Troy Bronkshire, Colorado Group Realty



The Best of the Best

WHERE TO FISH

If you're looking to test the waters before you buy, following is a list of the best spots to fish and the finest establishments to hang your waders after a long day fishin' the Rocky Mountain waters.

► **Montana:** World-class blue-ribbon trout are just waiting to bite at the Big Hole, Beaverhead, Gallatin, Jefferson, Madison and Big Horn rivers.

Idaho: The famed Henry's Fork, Snake and Teton rivers satisfy desires of anglers—novice and expert alike.

Wyoming: The Snake River is home to the Snake River Spotted Cutthroat, and the Green River is full of all kinds of trout, including the hybrid "cuttbowl."

Utah: The scenic Provo River, near Redford's Sundance Resort, was probably the impetus for his interest in fly-fishing.

Colorado: The White, Gunnison, and Colorado rivers offer excellent fishing for rainbows, brookies, browns and cutthroat trout.

WHERE TO STAY

► **Montana:** Located in the Beaverhead Valley, *Five Rivers Lodge* is the place where the professionals stay for high-quality lodging and exceptional access to the Ruby, Beaverhead and Big Hole rivers.

Idaho: *Three Rivers Ranch* is a family-owned and operated lodge located in eastern Idaho. Guests reside in rustic cabins along Robinson Creek or at the Ranch House.

Wyoming: It's not a fly-fishing lodge per se, but the *Amangani* is close enough to Spring Creek to allow an incredible meld of both world-class accommodations and fly-fishing.

Utah: The *Sundance Resort* is just minutes from the blue-ribbon trout waters of the Provo River, with all the upscale amenities a year-round ski resort could offer.

Colorado: Along the White River in the mountains of northwestern Colorado lies *Seven Lakes Lodge*. The 15,000 square-foot stone and log lodge offers eight private lake and riverfront suites.