

# Heart of the Rockies Initiative

Working to conserve clean water, iconic Western landscapes, and the communities that depend on them.

**Newsletter June 2019**



Photo of the Upper Centennial Valley, Montana, by Chris Boyer, with aerial support from LightHawk.

*Our vision for this region is of vast landscapes that are ecologically intact, functional, and linked together, and of human communities where local people retain their heritage and sense of place, enjoy a high quality of life, and are connected to nature.*



# HEART OF THE ROCKIES INITIATIVE

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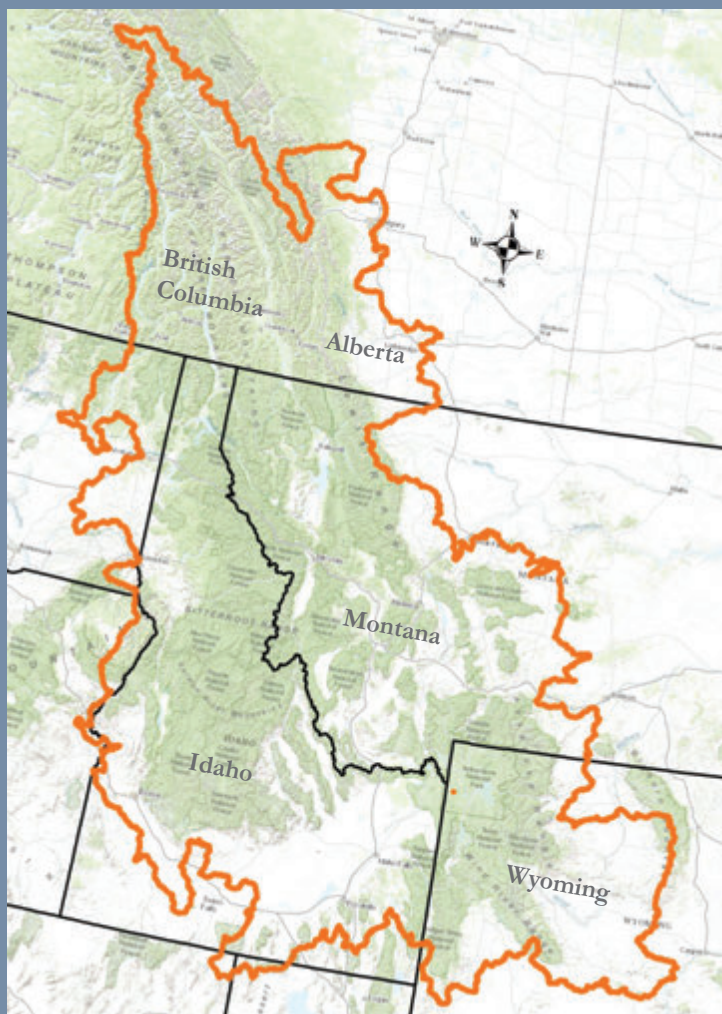
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## SERVING THE CENTRAL ROCKIES OF NORTH AMERICA



## HEART OF THE ROCKIES MEMBER LAND TRUSTS

Bear River Land Conservancy - Logan, UT

Bitter Root Land Trust – Hamilton, MT

Five Valleys Land Trust – Missoula, MT

Flathead Land Trust – Kalispell, MT

Gallatin Valley Land Trust – Bozeman, MT

Inland Northwest Land Conservancy– Spokane, WA

Jackson Hole Land Trust – Jackson, WY

Kanixsu Land Trust – Sandpoint, ID

Land Trust of the Treasure Valley - Boise, ID

Lemhi Regional Land Trust – Salmon, ID

Nature Conservancy of Canada - BC, AB

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Payette Land Trust - McCall, ID

Prickly Pear Land Trust – Helena, MT

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Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust – Pocatello, ID

Teton Regional Land Trust – Driggs, ID

The Conservation Fund

The Nature Conservancy – Idaho

The Nature Conservancy – Montana

The Nature Conservancy – Wyoming

Trust for Public Land

Vital Ground Foundation – Missoula, MT

Wood River Land Trust – Hailey, ID

Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust – Cheyenne, WY

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Gary Burnett

A message from our Executive Director:

## WORKING LOCAL, NEIGHBORING UP

Hello partners and friends,

After what seemed like the never ending winter, spring has arrived in the Central Rockies. We are fresh off the spring partnership meeting and High Divide Collaborative workshop, with renewed energy to sustain working land and communities.

We remain focused on our brand – providing the latest science, increasing local capacity for land trusts to operate, accessing private and public capital for conservation projects, and telling the partnership story. We support local land trusts, landowners, and communities in sharing ideas, connections, and technologies across our valleys, over the mountains, and across boundaries to sustain their land and communities over the long haul.

This summer and fall we are particularly driven to find new private capital for land protection and stewardship in the Central Rockies, and for shared values like water conservation, wildlife connectivity, and aspen regeneration/fire management in the High Divide. We will report

the pace of conserving private land, and make the case for increasing that pace through new capacity and capital. We will tell the story of how local people neighbor up across boundaries to address issues like water, wildlife, and fire that do not respect human boundaries.

What is the result of Heart of the Rockies' work? Making conservation dollars go farther by leveraging local resources with regional, state, and federal matches. Protecting credibility by encouraging high standards of science, transparency, and accreditation. A stronger, more united voice for private land conservation. Lasting solutions for the challenges facing nature, rural communities, land managers, and family farms and ranches. Access to the latest science and technology such as GIS capacity and conservation planning.

Thank you for hearing local values, and for your participation. It makes all the difference.

*Gary Burnett*

**Leave your legacy in the Rocky Mountain West – on its clean water, working family farms and ranches, and abundant wildlife. Consider making a planned gift to Heart of the Rockies Initiative.**

# Heart of the Rockies' 2019 Challenge Grants deliver \$113,000 to support land trust capacity

Thanks to generous support from a private family foundation, the Heart of the Rockies Initiative (HOTR) delivered capacity support in April for its land trust members through a competitive grant program.

This capacity support is helping recipient land trusts access new data, develop new tools in their outreach programs, develop new and deeper relationships with landowners and their communities, and deliver on-the-ground projects with families in their regions.

Collectively, these partner projects are helping us tell the story of this land trust partnership on a larger stage, and are delivering local conservation results that add up across the landscape into incredible and vital outcomes for communities, economies, natural systems, and wildlife populations.

The HOTR grant review committee pulled additional resources from our operating funds to augment the private family foundation funds and were able to make 13 grants totaling \$112,950. The review committee was excited to see strong engagement of our partners and their fantastic projects.

Here's an overview of each of the projects funded by the 2019 Land Trust Challenge Grant Program.

**Bitter Root Land Trust** will strategically add capacity to help free key staff to be able to focus more deeply on programmatic delivery.

**Five Valleys Land Trust** will apply funding toward their Upper Clark Fork and Flint Creek Valley Working Lands for Wildlife Project to ensure that some of the largest remaining tracts of working lands in western Montana remain intact.

**Gallatin Valley Land Trust** will support staff as they implement a significant outreach and project development plan within two of their focus areas – Bozeman Pass and Paradise Valley.

**Inland Northwest Land Conservancy** will create digital, print, and video materials telling a compelling story of private land conservation and wetland restoration in the lower Coeur d'Alene River Valley.

**Nature Conservancy of Canada** will be work collaboratively with regional and transboundary conservation partners through the Kootenay Connections project.

**Palouse Land Trust** will engage in collaborative planning efforts to conserve high-priority parcels, and spearhead media-rich tools to broadly share local success.

**Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust** will demystify the conservation easement process and increase awareness of conservation options for local landowners through a strategic outreach plan that includes key landowner meetings, a short film, and donor engagement.

**Teton Regional Land Trust** will develop materials that synthesize their recent conservation and strategic plans in a way that demonstrates impact on migration, climate, and other ecological and cultural values; develop compelling case for support that highlight landowner stories; and complete one conservation easement priority project.

**The Conservation Fund** will provide solutions to maintain working lands along the Rocky Mountain Front, including two priority projects.

**Trust for Public Land** will refine, update, and provide training on their Northern Rockies Decision Support Tool, which is an interactive, web-based, geospatial mapping application that enables staff and partners to identify, characterize, and assess the greatest land and watershed conservation opportunities.

**Vital Ground Foundation** will promote stories about how the protection of the highest priority landscapes for grizzly bears

GRANTS continued on page 13



# Wyoming land trusts host Spring Partnership Meeting in Pinedale



Jill Randall, WGFD, and Dan Schlager, TCF, led a field tour to the Luke Lynch Wildlife Habitat Management Area.

We enjoyed a wonderful partnership meeting in the Upper Green River Valley of Wyoming on May 15 and 16 with hosts from The Nature Conservancy, Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust, The Conservation Fund, and Jackson Hole Land Trust.

On our first day, we heard from Holly Copeland with the Wyoming Migration Initiative and University of Wyoming's cooperative research unit, a panel of collaborators working in the Upper Green, and went on a field tour to two important wildlife migration project areas.

Holly highlighted some of the current migration research being conducted in the state, and discussed a Corridor Mapping Team that the coop unit was asked to lead following a recent Secretarial Order from the Dept. of Interior. This

mapping team will work with several western states to coordinate and produce consistent mapping across all states. She also discussed how research is helping to inform on-the-ground work like evaluating the impact of potential conservation easements on conserving known migration routes.

The panel of collaborators included Eric Schacht from Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust, Abby Scott of The Nature Conservancy, Jill Randall from Wyoming Game & Fish Department, and Karen Clause from the Natural Resource Conservation Service. They talked about the long history of partnerships in the Upper Green that is the core of the successful land protection and stewardship work in the region. Some of the best practices they emphasized were building trusting relationships across the board, with landowners, with agency staff, and land trust staff; having good science available to inform decisions and drive innovation; and patience. Panelists also discussed their current Regional Conservation Partnership Program with NRCS and how it is boosting work in the region.

The field tour took us to the Luke Lynch Wildlife Habitat Management Area south of Fremont Lake. Dan Schlager of The Conservation Fund and Jill Randall led this portion of the tour, telling us some wonderful background on Luke and his work with The Conservation Fund, particularly this project on the Red Desert to Hoback mule deer migration. The second stop on the tour was at Trapper's Point just west of Cora

*PINEDALE* continued on page 13

# Filling in the patchwork quilt of the landscape

## Three new land trusts join Heart of the Rockies

The Heart of the Rockies Initiative is happy to welcome three new land trust members to the partnership, bringing us to a total of 25 land trusts operating across the Heart of the Rockies landscape. At the Spring Partnership Meeting, members voted to approve the applications of the Land Trust of the Treasure Valley of Boise, Idaho, the Payette Land Trust of McCall, Idaho, and the Bear River Land Conservancy of Logan, Utah.



**Eric Grace**

### Land Trust of the Treasure Valley - Boise, Idaho

The Land Trust of the Treasure Valley (LTTV) serves some of the fastest growing cities and counties in Idaho. LTTV has historically focused on trail and access conservation projects, with handful of conservation easement and fee title projects. The access program gained the organization a loyal following within the Boise region, and created good name recognition. At the end of 2018, the long-serving executive director retired. He has been replaced by a new executive director, Eric

Grace, formerly of the Kaniksu Land Trust in Sandpoint, Idaho. Eric has a mandate to expand programs, increase the pace of land protection, broaden the base of supporters, and continue the trails work that has proven successful.

"I am delighted to hear of LTTV's acceptance into HOTR," Eric said. "I look forward to engaging from my new organization, representing this new landscape."



**Craig Utter**

### Payette Land Trust - McCall, Idaho

Payette Land Trust operates in four counties of West Central Idaho to promote a community ethic that values and conserves its working agricultural and timber lands in balance with thoughtful development.

"In the foreword of A Sand County Almanac, Aldo Leopold wrote, 'Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them. Now we face the question whether a still higher standard of living is worth its cost in things natural, wild and free,' commented Craig Utter, executive director at

Payette Land Trust.

"The Payette Land Trust is excited to be a part of the larger conservation community who share this vision. While local challenges the PLT faces may be different from other partners, we understand we are not an 'independent part' but rather an 'interdependent part' of the Central Rocky Mountains of North America. Having the opportunity to work with the Heart of the Rockies Initiative will make us a stronger more vibrant voice for private land conservation in West Central Idaho."



**Casey Snider**

### Bear River Land Conservancy - Logan, Utah

The Bear River Land Conservancy (BRLC) operates in Northern Utah, particularly in the Bear River Watershed, which flows through parts of Utah, Wyoming, and Idaho. This watershed is on the southern terminus of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and provides an irreplaceable link to the Southern Rockies of Utah and Colorado. BRLC often partners with Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust in Pocatello, Idaho, who work in the lower Bear River watershed.

"The Bear River Land Conservancy is honored to be included in such a wonderful and austere group of land trusts. It is a remarkable opportunity to be able to work on conservation within the entire rocky mountain corridor and we look forward to furthering these conservation efforts on a regional scale," said executive director Casey Snider.





## News around the Heart of the Rockies

# Highlights from our members



### **Bitter Root Land Trust - Hamilton, MT**

With a ground-swell of community support, Bitter Root Land Trust just completed a fundraising campaign to purchase 70 acres of wetlands, meadows, cottonwood forest, and 1.5 mile of Bitterroot River frontage. Later this year, BRLT will donate the new Skalkaho Bend Park to the City of Hamilton, providing access to the river, and natural parklands, just outside downtown Hamilton, for residents and visitors alike.



### **Five Valleys Land Trust - Missoula, MT**

Five Valleys Land Trust's Buxbaum-Boulder Creek project recently protected over 1,100 acres of diverse wildlife habitat and agricultural land in the Flint Creek Valley, near Maxville. The project, which was made possible by many funding partners, will also provide a new, public hunting access through the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks' Block Management program.

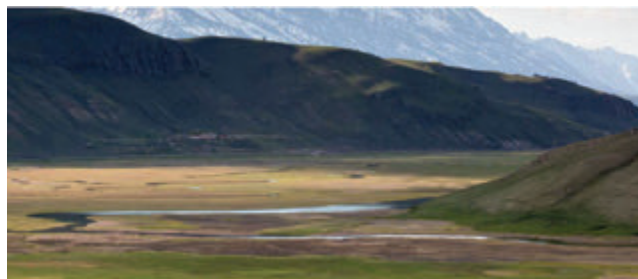
### **Gallatin Valley Land Trust - Bozeman, MT**

Construction on the 2.1 mile "Path to the M" is underway! This separated paved path provides an important connection from downtown Bozeman to the popular M trailhead and the Drinking Horse trail. This project is made possible by a \$675K grant from the City of Bozeman Trails, Open Space and Parks bond as well as a \$3.4 million grant from the Federal

Lands Access Program. Big thanks to City of Bozeman, Gallatin County, Western Transportation Institute, US Forest Service, Federal Highway Administration, Montana Department of Transportation, and Collin's Coalition for coming together to connect our community to our public lands.



Chris Boyd, GVLTr's first Executive Director, envisioned a trail system in the early 1990's where Bozeman residents could get on a trail close to home and travel to adjacent public lands; once there, public land trails then would lead to wild places and eventually all the way to Yellowstone Park and beyond. This concept became our "Mainstreet to the Mountains" trail system. We are proud to continue working on projects like the "Path to the M" that are part of the "Mainstreet to the Mountains" system that connect our community to large swaths of public lands near town; the "Path" will be complete this fall—what's next?



### **Jackson Hole Land Trust - Jackson, WY**

In April 2018, the third and final phase of the 313-acre landscape scale East Gros Ventre Butte project was completed, protecting critical wildlife habitat, the connectivity of migration corridors, and the inspiring views of the Tetons above the National Museum of Wildlife Art. This undisturbed land within a Sage-Grouse Core Area also provides essential winter refuge for mule deer. During other times of the year, elk and moose may be found on the land as they move between their summer and winter habitats. Birds find haven on the property – with nesting strata for prairie falcons,

red-tailed hawks, mountain bluebirds, western meadowlarks, and Brewer's sparrows. The East Gros Ventre Butte project's three phases incorporated five parcels with six ownerships, including a combination of three donated and purchased conservation easements and two land acquisitions. The completion of the East Gros Ventre Butte project eliminates development rights on all 313 acres with the intention to provide robust wildlife protection, particularly for wintering sage grouse and mule deer, and migrating elk. A variety of landowners and several key donors were critical to the project, which involved dozens of individuals and organizations that worked diligently to ensure the land would be protected for generations to come.



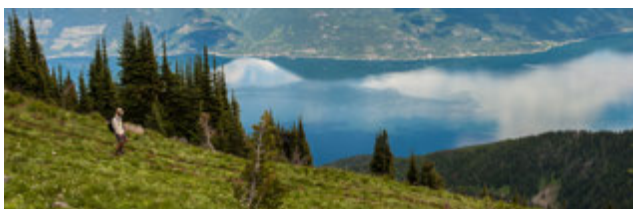
#### **Kaniksu Land Trust - Sandpoint, ID**

In March Kaniksu Land Trust completed a nearly 10-year, \$2.1 million project to conserve Pine Street Woods, a 160 acre parcel, as a community forest for recreation and education. Improvements to access and trails are underway, and KLT looks forward to introducing this remarkable place to our community in the near future.

#### **Lemhi Regional Land Trust - Salmon, ID**

Thanks to the generosity of long time Lemhi Regional Land Trust supporters, Bob and Nancy Russell, our community has gained one more public access opportunity along the Salmon River! In December, the Russells donated a five acre parcel in the Chinook subdivision that includes approximately 900 feet of Salmon River frontage and three acres of streamside cottonwood gallery habitat.

*Save the date:* Annual Working Lands Celebration, June 28th 5pm, Sacajawea Center, Salmon, ID



#### **Nature Conservancy of Canada - Invermere, BC**

The Nature Conservancy of Canada is working to secure the Next Creek watershed and protect the ecological integrity of a conservation network that has national and international significance. Next Creek is a 7,900-hectare (19,500-acre) property that extends from Kootenay Lake into the centre of Darkwoods.



#### **Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust - Pocatello, ID**

Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust protected 166 acres of key mule deer winter range habitat through a generous donation in December 2018. Acquiring this Pocatello property was just the first step- now, we are busy gathering information about its plants and animals, historical and current uses, and restoration opportunities to develop a management plan that serves the animals that rely on the land and the humans that care about it.

*Upcoming Event:* Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust's Bill Davidson Conservation Memorial BBQ will be on Thursday, July 11th, starting at 5:30 pm. Join us for a night of great food and drinks, live music, and news about local conservation! Admission \$15. RSVP (208) 240-6045.

#### **Trust for Public Land - Bozeman, MT**

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, The Trust for Public Land, and partners received the Habitat Conservation Partnership Award at the 2019 Wings Across the Americas Ceremony in April for their collaboration on the Whitefish Lake Watershed Project. The project adds 13,398 acres of forestland to the Stillwater State Forest, protecting clean water, public access for recreation, important habitat for fish and wildlife – including grizzly bears, Canada lynx, and bull trout --- and local forestry jobs.



#### **Vital Ground Foundation - Missoula, MT**

The Wild River project lies in northwest Montana's Kootenai River Valley, connecting habitat for grizzly bears and wildlife between the Cabinet and Purcell Mountains. Building on over 100 acres of land previously purchased and in collaboration with HOTR in this linkage area, this third phase of the Wild River project protects and restores two subdivided lots (10 acres) which was prioritized for protection by bear biologists in Vital Ground's Habitat and Conflict Inventory and Prioritization (HCIP).

For more information about the project, visit [www.conservewith.us/wildriver](http://www.conservewith.us/wildriver) For more information about Vital Ground's HCIP, contact [mdoherty@vitalground.org](mailto:mdoherty@vitalground.org)



# Land Trust Alliance launches Pacific Northwest Climate Initiative

The Land Trust Alliance launched a new initiative supporting Pacific Northwest land trusts focusing on climate resilient conservation. Through the Pacific Northwest Resilient Landscapes Initiative, the Alliance has partnered with Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Oregon Community Foundation, the Seattle Foundation, and the Idaho Community Foundation to fund land protection projects across the region that preserve biodiversity, wildlife habitat, and connectivity in the face of a changing climate.

The Initiative builds on the Alliance's existing Pacific Northwest Advancing Conservation Excellence program that helps land trusts in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho be high-performing nonprofit organizations. Doris Duke Charitable Foundation has committed \$4 million in land protection capital and an additional \$150,000 in technical assistance to support land trusts in adopting and implementing resilience science. The community foundations have collectively pledged to raise an additional \$3 million for land capital and land trust capacity building.

Through this innovative partnership, the Alliance aims both to catalyze climate-smart conservation and build stronger links between community philanthropists and the Pacific Northwest land trusts.

Land trusts in the region that are accredited or on a pathway to accreditation are eligible to seek land capital grants for projects that advance climate resilience. And so you ask... just what IS climate resilience? For the Pacific

Northwest Resilient Landscapes, the Alliance is utilizing a framework developed by The Nature Conservancy known as "Conserving Nature's Stage."

Built on the recognition that climate change impacts vary by species and locale, and are inherently difficult to predict, Conserving Nature's Stage focuses on the underlying landscape drivers of biodiversity such as local topographical and microclimate diversity and the connectivity of habitats across the landscape. Complementing the species- and habitat-focused approaches typically employed by land trusts, Conserving Nature's Stage can identify opportunities to help today's habitat values endure in a future climate.

The Alliance and partners are currently reaching out to land trusts and offering trainings in resilience science. Idaho land trusts received initial introduction to the tools at the May 14 Idaho Coalition of Land Trusts meeting in Driggs, Idaho. This joint session featured Kelly Watkinson, LTA's Land and Climate Program Manager, Bob Unaasch, TNC Idaho's Director of Science, and Bray Beltrán, Heart of the Rockies' Science Director, teaching about these practical, cutting edge tools for identifying natural places predicted to withstand climate impacts and offer refuge to diverse plants and animals.

The next opportunity will be at Northwest Land Camp on June 18. A request for proposals, both for land capital and technical assistance grants, will be released in late summer. LTA encourages interested land trusts to reach out directly to the Alliance.



## Visiting partners in Canada

In May, Heart of the Rockies staff traveled to Cranbrook, British Columbia, to meet with partners and tour a conservation project area. Pictured here (L to R) are HOTR new Board Director Dave Hillary, HOTR Executive Director Gary Burnett, Juliet Craig of the Kootenay Conservation Program, and Richard Klafki of the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

# High Divide Collaborative 6th Annual Workshop



We had a great turn out in April for our 2019 High Divide Collaborative Workshop. More than 100 people came together in Idaho Falls to share and learn about aspen communities, the intersection of working lands/water management/sagebrush habitat, and ecological connectivity in the High Divide.

The rotating conversation session allowed for smaller, more personal conversations about connectivity topics and tools that impact our region, and inform our work. Our panelist sparked some great discussions surrounding partnerships in sagebrush country, and working lands. Paul Rogers from the Western Aspen Alliance filled us in on the important role that aspen plays both ecologically and socially in the High Divide.

And our breakout sessions on the last day were great primers for advancing action in the collaborative around capacity building, ecological connectivity, the Farms and Fish project from the Upper Snake, and aspen restoration. Stay tuned for a report from the workshop, and thanks again to everyone who participated.

## SAVE THE DATES:

September 1-3, 2019 - High Divide Celebration and Field Tours

Feb 12-13, 2020 - High Divide Workshop at Fairmont Hot Springs, MT



## High Divide Coordinating Committee

We were able to capture a few members of the Coordinating Committee for a photograph at this year's workshop. Pictured in front are Pedro Marques (L) of the Big Hole Watershed Committee and Jim Roscoe (R) of the Lemhi Regional Land Trust. In back (L to R) are Merrill Beyeler of Beyeler Ranches, Sean Finn of US Fish & Wildlife Service, Brandon Hoffner of Henry's Fork Foundation, Toni Ruth of Salmon Valley Stewardship, Zak Miller of Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, and Kim Trotter of Yellowstone to Yukon Initiative. We appreciate their leadership and guidance.

## High Divide Land and Water Conservation Fund Project Update

The High Divide Collaborative was successful in 2016 and 2017 in securing \$30 million in Land and Water Conservation Funding through the Collaborative Landscape Planning program. Though many projects are still in process, to-date partners have worked with landowners to conserve over 2,300 acres, with additional projects expected to close in the near future.

These projects:

- protect a high priority segment of the Nez Perce NHT
- enhance public access
- conserve habitat, migration routes for elk and deer

- protect habitat for peregrine falcon and sharp-tailed grouse
- conserve waterway corridors important for cutthroat trout, salmon and steelhead

Several projects have been slower to progress due to problems with mineral rights issues, appraisal issues, and changes in interest from landowners. In many cases there has been a need to find new projects to replace earlier priorities. We remain hopeful that these issues will get worked out soon.



# Heart of the Rockies welcomes new Directors to the Board

Dave Hillary is Director, Corporate Development & Strategic Partnerships at the Canadian Wildlife Federation (CWF). He works to develop and sustain deep, meaningful, and long-term relationships with corporations, foundations, and governmental organizations who align with the vision, mission, and mandate of CWF across Canada and internationally.

A former Manager and Director with the Nature Conservancy Canada (NCC), where he spent 12 years, Dave brings deep and meaningful conservation experience and relationships to his work at CWF. He is a champion for the idea of conservation outcomes through collaboration and was

previously Chairperson of the East Kootenay Conservation Program (EKCP) and the Heart of the Rockies Initiative (HOTR) in addition to leading NCC's trans-boundary North America Partnerships Initiative.

He has three degrees in natural and social sciences and is a recovering professor of Environmental Sciences. He has homes in Silverton - British Columbia, Ottawa - Ontario and Barra de Navidad, Jalisco, Mexico. Off the clock, Dave likes to explore, take very long short-cuts, paddle his kayak, travel in Mexico and spend time with his vagabond children and grandchildren who are all global travelers.



**Dave Hillary**  
Silverton, BC

Chris Bryant is the Western Montana Land Protection Director for The Nature Conservancy. He's been with the organization for more than 10 years working on various aspects of their large-scale acquisition and management of projects involving former industrial timberland.

Chris manages relationships with agency, government, NGO, academic, and community partners—and serves as the lead for protection and collaborative work with federal and state agencies.

He serves on the board of the Blackfoot Challenge where he is chair of the Conservation Strategies Committee.

Before joining The Nature Conservancy, Chris designed and led journalism education expeditions with the Institutes for Journalism and Natural Resources across the American west. He lives in Missoula with his wife, Julie, and two kids, Isabella and Ben.

"I'm honored to be asked to join the board of Heart of the Rockies. I've worked with Gary for years, and admire his commitment to collaborative work and regional partnerships. I'm eager to help serve that mission. Using strong science to inform our collective impact and doing the critical work of telling our stories better—to funders, to communities and to decision-makers—are things we need to be continually striving to do well."



**Chris Bryant**  
Missoula, MT

## Farewell to past Directors of the Board: Chris DeForest and Jim Berkey

Last year, two long-time Board Members reached their two-term limits. We said farewell to Chris DeForest of the Inland Northwest Land Conservancy and Jim Berkey of The Nature Conservancy - Montana. Both have long been involved with the Heart

of the Rockies Initiative and we appreciate their years of leadership and service on the Board of Directors. We are grateful for all they do for private land conservation in the region and look forward to partnering with them in different capacities.



## SCIENCE CORNER:

### Conservation easements and their contribution at the landscape scale



Bray Beltrán, Science Director

One of the strengths of our land protection work is the voluntary nature of conservation easements. However, this approach seldom allows us to strategically select a parcel for protection in advance and makes our conservation work mostly opportunistic. Therefore, when we think about the protection of different types of ecosystems, and wildlife habitat and connectivity at the landscape scale, the question remains, is the collection of our opportunistic work meaningfully contributing to the protection of priority ecosystems and wildlife connectivity?

A recent study by *Graves et al., 2019*, takes a look at this question in the High Divide region of our partnership area. Graves and her colleagues looked at (i) how conservation easements contribute to ecosystem representation and conservation of priority ecosystems at regional and national scales, and (ii) how well the current pattern of conservation easements contribute to conservation of lands important for landscape connectivity. They also compared how conservation easements compared to choosing areas at random and to public lands in each case.

The results from this study indicate that while conservation easements cover only a small portion of the land in the region, they contribute substantially the

protection of priority ecosystems and provide complementary conservation value to public land at the regional scale, even in a public land dominated landscape like the High Divide.

Additionally, conservation easements performed better than areas chosen at random with respect to providing landscape connectivity, albeit slightly. Simply put, this study indicates that while the land trust community depends on the opportunity presented by generous private landowners who wish to place their land under a conservation easement, these seemingly random actions are meaningfully contributing priority ecosystem and wildlife connectivity protection.

To us, staff at Heart of the Rockies Initiative, this paper highlights the importance of developing a strategic collective action plan (our mission if followed using a community-based approach) to augment your valuable work on the landscape. We are diligently working with foundations and private funders, and developing a fundraising campaign, to bring in resources that allow us to support your work in this manner.

## Mentoring Doris Duke Conservation Scholars this summer

In the past year we have started to look at ways to make our work at Heart of the Rockies Initiative and our contribution to conservation more equitable and inclusive. One of the results of this work is the opportunity to work and mentor two interns (Madeleine Gefke and Isabella Johnson) this summer.

These interns are part of the Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program, and Doris Duke Foundation Program committed to increase the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the conservation field. Madeleine and Bella will spend one week in Pocatello learning about our partnership

and land trust work, and meeting with conservation practitioners and academic researchers, to learn about different type of career options they could pursue.

They will then spend seven weeks in the field, near and around Craters of the Moon National Monument, collecting DNA samples and analyzing them in a mobile lab studying real-world corridors bordered by agricultural and urban lands and will measure corridor success in term of the gene flow across these areas. The overall goal of the project is that by studying many corridors that

vary in width and length, it will determined what corridor widths and corridor lengths provide gene flow, and which types of species benefit from corridors.

A third intern, Lily Fanok, will also be working with us this summer. Lily, a graduate student at the University of Idaho, will provide our science program GIS support, and overall organizational support while JoAnn is away on sabbatical leave this summer.



contributes to climate adaptation and habitat connectivity, and will share Habitat and Conflict Inventory and Prioritization results with other HOTR land trusts to promote collaboration and inform their habitat protection and conflict prevention work.

**Wood River Land Trust** will create a powerful series of short films to raise awareness for protecting our landscapes, our wildlife, and our way of life in the face of unsustainable growth and climate change.

**Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust** will support the development of five new conservation easement projects with a combined acreage of 11,900, and will collect and share stories of conserved ranches in western Wyoming.



Trapper's Point, Cora, Wyoming

PINEDALE continued from page 5

and along the Path of the Pronghorn. Several partners have worked with ranchers on conservation easement projects in the area, which is also home the Green River Drift, a century-old cattle drive listed on the National Register of Historic Places. At the same time, this area holds cultural and archaeological significance, with use dating as far back 8,000 years ago.

On day two, the members elected Chris Bryant to the Board of Directors. Chris is the Western Montana Lands Program Director for The Nature Conservancy out of Missoula, Montana. Members also approved the applications of three new land trusts seeking to join the Heart of the Rockies Initiative: Bear River Land Conservancy, Land Trust of the Treasure Valley, and Payette Land Trust. You can read more about our new members on page 6.

Heart of the Rockies staff provided updates on developing a landscape campaign. Heart of the Rockies is a network of local land trusts that work together for better local results. Those local results add up across the landscape into vital outcomes for communities, economies, natural systems, and wildlife populations.

Heart of the Rockies is embarking on a multi-year effort to bring more resources to this network of land trusts. HOTR Science Director Bray Beltrán reviewed results of an effort to identify priority lands for connectivity, climate resilience, and prime agricultural soils. Program Director JoAnn Grant reviewed a communications strategy to combine the incredible storytelling each land trust already does into a collective story of big impact. Development Director Kali Hannon reviewed past campaign development framework and led a discussion on a refined structure for bringing new resources to Heart of the Rockies land trusts. We received a lot of informative feedback and input on all three elements presented and will be talking one-on-one with partners over the next few months to fully refine this approach.

We want to thank all of our Wyoming partners for hosting a wonderful get together, and thank everyone who traveled to Pinedale. We look forward to seeing everyone in the Fall.

*Save the Date: November 5-6, 2019, at Fairmont Hot Springs, Montana.*

# HEART OF THE ROCKIES INITIATIVE - 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

## *Highlights from the year....*

### **Partnership Meetings**

*May 2018 – Sun Valley, Idaho* We held a joint meeting with the Idaho Coalition of Land Trusts and learned about long-term succession planning and conservation finance and ballot measures, along with peer learning panels on both topics.

*October 2018 – Missoula, Montana* This meeting focused on refining our strategy to bring more resources to partner land trusts through using new data to identify priorities, telling our collective story, and a campaign to market all partners' work.

### **High Divide Collaborative**

*April 2018 - Dillon, Montana* This 5th annual workshop focused on the themes of drought resilience, forests and fire, and wildlife connectivity and conflict reduction. We were also introduced to a structured-decision-making process led by researchers from the University of Idaho.

### **Land and Water Conservation Fund**

*August 2018 – South Fork of the Snake River, Idaho* In support of re-authorizing LWCF, we worked with the Idaho LWCF Coalition on a fantastic celebration event on the South Fork, a premiere example of LWCF success. The celebration included float and ground tours and were highlighted by remarks by Congressman Mike Simpson and staff members for Senators Jim Risch and Mike Crapo.

### **Corridor Research**

We partnered with the Center for Large Landscape Conservation and Dr. Paul Beier of Northern Arizona University on research aiming to determine how narrow, long, or disturbed a wildlife corridor can be and still provide gene flow. This research is supported by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

### **Adding new staff**

In 2018, we found some great additions to our fundraising efforts and our work coordinating the High Divide Collaborative. Kali Hannon joined us as our development director and has been instrumental in diversifying our income. Emily Harkness first joined us as an intern to help coordinate new working groups in the High Divide and she did so well, we asked her to stay on full-time.

### **Honoring Michael Whitfield**

*October 2018 – Pittsburgh, PA* Heart of the Rockies staff and numerous partners attended the Land Trust Alliance Rally and helped to celebrate our former executive director, Michael Whitfield, as he was honored with the Kingsbury Browne Conservation Leadership Award.

### **Network for Landscape Conservation**

Our executive director, Gary Burnett, serves on the NLC Coordinating Committee, and presented at the LTA Rally in October on Collaborating at Landscape Scale.

## 2018 GIVING: THANK YOU .....WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!

*Our work in 2018 was supported by gifts from:*

Brian and Kathleen Bean  
Bray Beltrán and Rebecah Hale  
Jim Berkey  
Boise State University  
Brainerd Foundation  
Sarah Breckenridge  
Timothy and Wendy Brockish  
Gary and Wanda Burnett  
Charlotte Martin Foundation  
Cinnabar Foundation  
Cross Charitable Foundation  
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Martha and Rob Hayes  
Dave Hillary

Wendy Hughson  
Denny and Charlotte Iverson  
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Joselin Matkins  
Linda Merigiano  
David Miller  
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Kit Muller  
Wendy Ninteman  
Nick Norton  
Keith Orton

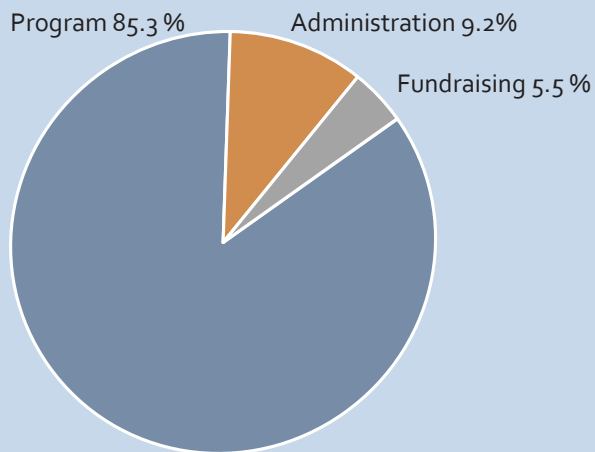
Jim Owens and Debbie Dain  
Karen Rice  
Toni Ruth  
Gary Tabor and Raina Plowright  
Kristin Troy  
Vital Ground Foundation  
Michael Whitfield and Liz Davy  
Wilburforce Foundation  
William & Flora Hewlett Foundation  
David and Susie Work  
Susan Wright



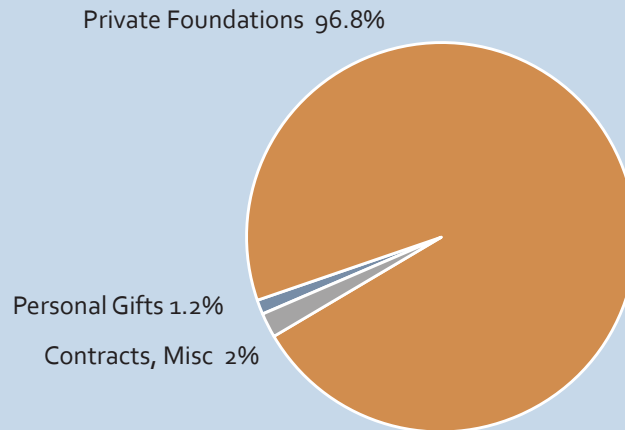
# FINANCIAL REPORT

Our 2018 Financials were audited by an independent accounting firm, Peterson CPA Group, P.C., of Missoula, MT, and approved by the Board of Directors in May 2019.

## EXPENSES BY CATEGORY - \$482,896 TOTAL



## SOURCES OF SUPPORT - \$543,278 TOTAL



## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION DECEMBER 31, 2018

	2018 (Audited)
<b>ASSETS</b>	
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 413,204
Pledges receivable	\$ 50,000
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 463,204</b>
<b>OTHER ASSETS</b>	
Long-term grant receivables	\$ 50,000
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 513,204</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	
Accounts payable	\$ 1,961
Accrued payroll liabilities	\$ 10,412
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$ 12,373</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	
Without donor restrictions	\$ 87,426
With donor restrictions	\$ 413,405
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 500,831</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 513,204</b>

HEART OF THE ROCKIES INITIATIVE  
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## HEART OF THE ROCKIES INITIATIVE

a land trust partnership

### MISSION

To increase the pace and durable impact of conservation for both the continentally irreplaceable landscapes of the Central Rocky Mountain corridor and community values that are prized locally.

### VALUES

Relevant, community-based conservation - *Our approach to conservation is based upon concern and respect for the people and communities of our region.*

Long-term landscape scale outcomes - *We work with many partners to ensure dynamically connected, resilient and sustainable landscapes and communities across the Central Rocky Mountain corridor for the long-term.*

Trust to sustain our ability to work collaboratively - *Our members, partners, funders, and communities must have confidence in our ability to do what we say we will do. We value our integrity and ability to add value.*

Scientific, knowledge based approach - *Our work is guided by application of scientific understanding and respect for local knowledge.*

Organizational excellence - *We work to ensure that both we and our members are effective, impactful, financially sound, and sustainable organizations that meet their stewardship obligations.*

Transboundary outcomes - *We are committed to communicate and cooperate with many partners across state, provincial, and international boundaries, and strive to set a global example for cooperative conservation action.*