

HEART OF THE ROCKIES

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

November 2019



The High Divide Collaborative celebrated the closing of a new public access project on the Madison River in September. See the story on page 12.

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

SERVING THE CENTRAL ROCKIES OF NORTH AMERICA

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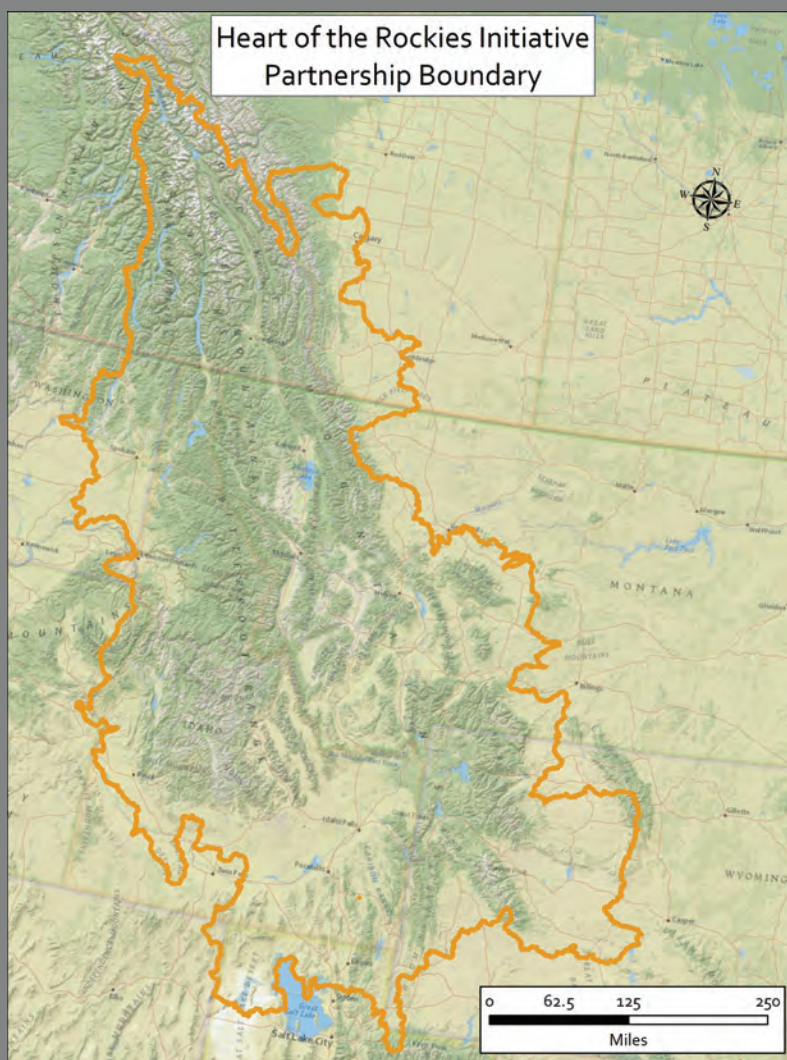
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HEART OF THE ROCKIES MEMBER LAND TRUSTS

Bear River Land Conservancy – Logan, UT

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Flathead Land Trust – Kalispell, MT

Gallatin Valley Land Trust – Bozeman, MT

Inland Northwest Land Conservancy – Spokane, WA

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The Nature Conservancy – Wyoming

Trust for Public Land – Bozeman, MT

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:

LOOKING FOR MORE SOLUTIONS TO SUPPORT LANDOWNERS

We live in a rapidly changing world, where our future depends on bold new conservation strategies that retain the connections between public lands and privately owned farms, ranches, and timberlands. We have a rare opportunity in the Rocky Mountain West to protect existing ecosystems, instead of trying to rebuild them. But time is short.

The Heart of the Rockies Initiative region is losing roughly 115 acres per day to development – and the rate is increasing. In the High Divide alone, the number of single-family homes nearly tripled over the past 50 years, and more than half occurred outside of city limits and within key wildlife habitat.

Working farms, ranches, and timber lands provide critical links between core public land habitats and often represent the richest, most productive habitat themselves. Yet the pressure to develop is relentless.

Loss of wildlife habitat on private land not only impacts species like mule deer, sandhill cranes, and

grizzly bears, but harms local families and communities, and reduces food security, clean water, rural livelihoods, and climate resilience.

Across the West, the people who own and manage farms, ranches, and timberlands are looking for tools to keep their lands intact for traditional uses, including wildlife habitat. Local land trusts are critically important partners for bringing those solutions to the table.

However, existing funding sources often don't adequately support maintaining or enhancing wildlife connectivity through private lands. Too often, we lack the private funding match needed to take full advantage of public funding. When dedicated funding is available, however, land trusts have a proven track record of success.

At Heart of the Rockies Initiative, we are a network of local land trusts who work together for better local results. Look for updates on our work to address this funding need.

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.

New Pilot Project partners with USDA Rural Development in Montana

The Heart of the Rockies Initiative is excited to announce the launch of a new pilot Rural Development Program to support rural development in western Montana and its communities that are facing changes in land use, wildlife populations, weather, and economic stability.

“Thriving rural communities and working lands are essential to sustaining natural resource conservation,” said Erin Farris-Olsen, Rural Development Director for the Heart of the Rockies Initiative.

Our goal for this program is to deliver more access to USDA Rural Development, Montana Department of Commerce, and additional economic programs and resources to benefit western Montana communities. By marketing and implementing rural development programs in high conservation interest areas, we will work to bridge the gap between conservation, economic, and social values. The Heart of the

Rockies Rural Development Program is starting out as a pilot project, that, if successful, could transfer to communities throughout Montana and the West.

“USDA Rural Development is excited to have the Heart of the Rockies and other conservation interests join existing partners to help rural towns access more business, community infrastructure, and housing funding opportunities through our programs,” said Charles Robison, USDA Rural Development Montana State Director.

Erin will be identifying up to five priority communities for direct assistance in 2020. In addition to assisting priority communities, Erin will be actively delivering rural development resource information to



Erin Farris-Olsen, our new Rural Development Director, met recently with community members in Choteau, Montana.

our existing conservation networks, including land trust associations, watershed groups, and conservation districts.

We’re excited about the opportunity to draw a more visible connection between economic vitality and innovative community-based landscape conservation and welcome your thoughts and ideas along the way.

For more information, contact Erin Farris-Olsen at 406-461-8530, or erin@heart-of-rockies.org.



Erin Farris-Olsen joins the Heart of the Rockies’ Staff

We are happy to announce the addition of Erin Farris-Olsen to the Heart of the Rockies’ staff as director of the Rural Development pilot project.

Erin is an enrolled member of the Brothertown Indian Nation and graduate in Environmental Studies and Communication from Carroll College and Natural Resources Law at the University of Oregon. Erin has worked on numerous community based

conservation and social justice initiatives in Liberia, Belize, and Montana. Because she believes strong communities are essential to sustaining conservation, Erin is inspired to employ rural development resources to ensure the resiliency of Montana's communities for future generations. In her spare time, Erin likes to fly fish, camp, and hike around Helena with her husband Rob, children Tupper and Auggie, and their dog June Bug.



Report from the Fall Partnership Meeting

Heart of the Rockies' member land trusts gathered for our Fall Partnership Meeting on November 5-6 at Fairmont Hot Springs, Montana. We focused the first day on strategic planning, exploring how this partnership can increase the pace of private land conservation over the next few years.

We started with a history that illustrated the growth of the land trust community.

When Heart of the Rockies began in 2002, an old survey reported that 15 land trusts were involved, employing 47 staff, and that they had worked with landowners to conserve 288,000 acres within the region.

In 2019, those numbers have grown to 26 land trust members, employing 226 staff, and conserving more than four million acres.

Twenty-two of the 26 land trusts are accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, a

significant higher percentage than the national scene where 439 of the more than 2,000 land trusts receive the distinction. Accreditation is an ongoing commitment to sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance, and lasting stewardship.

Heart of the Rockies has contributed to that success by supporting the growth of 65 staff positions, investing in leadership training through the Land Trust Alliance for executive directors, and providing important networking, peer learning opportunities, and training on a variety of topics. The Initiative has helped to secure millions in public and private funding for land trust projects. It has been a think tank and incubator of new ideas like easement litigation insurance and our state land trust associations, and continues to ensure strategic focus on lands of greatest importance for landscape-scale conservation by bridging landscape-scale science with local resource knowledge.

In 2019, there are 26 land trust members, employing 226 staff, and conserving more than four million acres.

Looking ahead in the strategic planning process, we dug into how Heart of the Rockies can build on those contributions and work with our many partners to continue to amplify the work of land trusts across our region. We expect to have a strategic planning document completed in early 2020. One participant said it was the most fun strategic planning they've been a part of. A big thank you to Don Elder at Training Resources for the expert facilitation, and to the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for supporting everyone's travel costs.

On day two, we learned about two federal funding tools and capital campaigns in peer-to-peer panel discussions. Tom Mallon with Montana Association of Land Trusts, Vickie Edwards with Five Valleys Land Trust, and Kyle Barber with Bitter Root Land Trust shared their experiences with the Natural Resource Conservation Service's (NRCS) Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) Program and outlooks from the new provisions in the 2018 Farm Bill. Tom shared some impressive

MEETING continued on next page



Montana Land Reliance joins the Heart of the Rockies Initiative

Photo by cfboyer.com/LightHawk

The Heart of the Rockies Initiative is pleased to welcome a new land trust member to the partnership, bringing us to a total of 26 land trusts operating across the Heart of the Rockies landscape. At the Fall Partnership Meeting, members voted to approve the application of the Montana Land Reliance.

The Montana Land Reliance is a recognized leader in conserving the working lands, wildlife habitat, migration corridors, and waterways that define the state. They were

established in 1978, and serve the entire state of Montana, partnering with private landowners to permanently protect agricultural lands, fish and wildlife habitat, and open space.

They recently celebrated reaching the one million-acre mark of conservation easements, having worked with families across the state on 800 different projects.

Within HOTR's working region, the Montana Land Reliance holds 231

conservation easements on 92,000 acres in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem region; 243 conservation easements on 276,000 acres in the High Divide region; and 265 conservation easements on 361,000 acres in the Crown of the Continent region.

The organization is led by a team of co-managing directors: Lois Delger-DeMars, Kendall Van Dyk, and Jordan Vana. Their main office is in Helena.

MEETING continued from previous page

figures: in federal fiscal year 2019, Montana land trusts, in close partnership with NRCS and landowners, collectively closed a total of 16 ALE easements, conserving over 71,000 acres of working agricultural lands. In the same fiscal year, the other 49 states closed 51,000 acres of ALE easements.

Another NRCS program called the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) was discussed in a panel with Peter Brown of Gallatin Valley Land Trust, Tom Mallon of Montana Association of Land Trusts, and Emily Harkness and Kali Hannon with Heart of the Rockies Initiative.

RCPP brings together a broad suite of partners for innovation, leveraging

contributions and finding impactful solutions. The program provides funding for conservation easements and land management activities.

The final panel of the day shared successes and challenges of Capital Campaigns. We heard from Jeske

Grave of Teton Regional Land Trust, Dick Dolan of Trust for Public Land, Katie Cox of Kaniksu Land Trust, and Richard Klafki of Nature Conservancy of Canada (pictured below).





News around the Heart of the Rockies

Highlights from our members

Bear River Land Conservancy — Logan, UT

Bear River Land Conservancy is working with the state's Watershed Restoration Initiative to restore riverbanks along the Bear River. This project will begin with a focus on a stretch of river where 20 feet of riverbank has washed away over the past 10 years.



Bitter Root Land Trust — Hamilton, MT

Many of Bitter Root Land Trust's landowners are continuing a Winter Eagle Project with Bitterroot Audubon, MPG Ranch, and RaptorView Research Institute. The Bitterroot Valley has a large overwintering population of bald and golden eagles. The project places motion-sensor cameras on carcasses set on ranches throughout the valley and captures eagle activity, in addition to lots of other scavengers.

To learn more about the project and how you can engage as a citizen scientist, check out the citizen science page on bitterrootaudubon.org. The project has also partnered with MAPS Media Institute, a non-profit media arts organization that offers free-of-charge classes to 8-12th grade students. Students have developed a series of 10 short films from footage captured at the carcass sites, available on their YouTube channel.



Photo courtesy of Jenny Zaso.

Five Valleys Land Trust — Missoula, MT

Five Valleys Land Trust announced Jenny Zaso as their new executive director in October. Jenny brings a strong background in both corporate and nonprofit strategic planning, organizational development, and fundraising to the position, along with extensive knowledge of land conservation work.



Photo by Catherine Walters.

Five Valleys Land Trust also announced a new project with rancher Anna Marie Hayes-Harrison in the Blackfoot Valley that conserved 600 acres of postcard-like prime agricultural land. Funding support came from the landowner, NRCS Agricultural Land Easement Program, and Missoula County Open Land Program.

Flathead Land Trust — Kalispell, MT and The Conservation Fund — Missoula, MT



The Flathead Land Trust and The Conservation Fund partnered with landowners and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the addition of 257 acres to the 1,800-acre Smith Valley Waterfowl Production Area this fall. The Smith Valley wetlands complex is a critical stopover for tens of thousands of birds on their epic migration journeys, species like cinnamon teal, American bittern, sandhill cranes, and warblers. The wetlands also support a great blue heron rookery. This scenic area is enjoyed by travelers on Hwy 2 and the adjacent Rails to Trails bike path.



Gallatin Valley Land Trust — Bozeman, MT

GVLTV celebrated a major milestone of the Main Street to the Mountains Trail system in Bozeman, Montana, at the end of October with a ribbon cutting on the Path to the M section. This trail system links Bozeman residents to the Bridger Mountain Range to the north and the Gallatin Range to the south. GVLTV started work on this trail system nearly 30 years ago – successful projects like this require focus and dedication.

Additionally, as part of their Regional Conservation Partnership Program project with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, GVLTV partnered with the Kamps family and the Gallatin County Open Land Program to conserve 494 acres of productive agricultural land near the Gallatin River. The Kamps family has successfully farmed the property for generations, and their goal is to keep it that way.



Inland Northwest Land Conservancy — Spokane, WA

For thousands of years, tundra swans have migrated every spring through the Coeur d'Alene River corridor, stopping to feed and rest on the way to their Arctic nesting grounds. And then a hundred years ago, mines in the Silver Valley began to pour their wastes into the river, and spring floods carried lead and arsenic, heavy metals, into the floodplains and chain lakes. Today, when those tundra swans stop to feed in the shallows, they swallow the poisons and they die by the dozens.

In tandem with willing landowners and conservation partners like Ducks Unlimited, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Inland Northwest Land Conservancy is helping make hundreds and hundreds of acres of land safe for swans and other living creatures. The Conservancy is retiring the development rights, dedicating the land to wildlife, and enabling other entities to clean up the toxins and restore the great marshes. In August, they permanently protected 162 acres of Canyon Marsh, and this winter will protect another 500+ acres through three more conservation agreements.



Gregory Nickerson/Wyoming Migration Initiative, University of Wyoming via Creative Commons

Jackson Hole Land Trust — Jackson, WY

The Jackson Hole Land Trust announced in September that 605 acres in Sublette County, Wyoming, located along the Red Desert to Hoback Mule Deer migration corridor have been protected through the Willow Lake Pasture Conservation Easement now held by the Green River Valley Program of the Jackson Hole Land Trust.

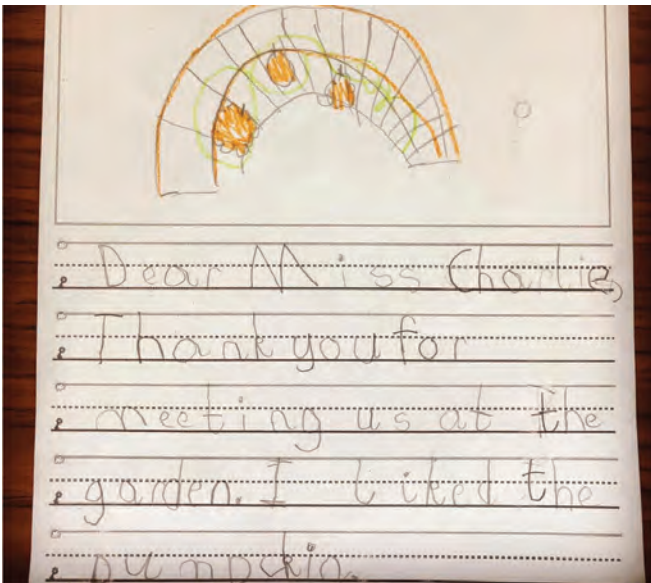


Kaniksu Land Trust — Sandpoint, ID

Kaniksu Land Trust celebrated the opening of Pine Street Woods in October. This new 180-acre public access and trail system is in the heart of Sandpoint, Idaho, providing exceptional outdoor recreation and education opportunities. The community helped raise \$2.1 million to complete the project.

Land Trust of the Treasure Valley — Boise, ID

Boise's Channel 6 News recently reported on Boise State University researcher Jodi Brandt and her study of the results of vanishing farmland in the Treasure Valley, where Boise is located. Treasure Valley is one of the fastest growing locations in the nation, losing farmland at an alarming rate. LTV executive director Eric Grace is interviewed for the November report.



Lemhi Regional Land Trust — Salmon, ID

Lemhi Regional Land Trust recently wrapped up fall classes in the Salmon School Garden and received some sweet thank yous from a group of first graders. The Salmon School Garden Project is a community project that connects students to their academics, their food, and their community. LRLT purchased the Garden property in 2017 thanks to a generous donation from founding board member, Fran Tonsmeire, as part of her estate. LRLT's ownership of this property ensures that the SSGP will have a permanent home and that students will always have the opportunity to dig in the soil, grow their own food, and stay connected to their rich agricultural heritage.



Montana Land Reliance — Helena, MT

Montana Land Reliance launched their new book "A Million Acres" this month with readings in Missoula and Helena. The book is an anthology from celebrated Montana writers telling the story of voluntary private land conservation and the success of MLR. Books can be ordered through your local bookstore or online at River Bend Publishing.



Nature Conservancy of Canada — Invermere, BC

The Nature Conservancy of Canada announced this summer that it acquired nearly 20,000 acres of rare inland temperate rainforest in the South Selkirk Mountains of British Columbia. This acquisition effectively completes the Darkwoods Conservation Area by filling the "hole" that has been in the center of the areas since it was first established in 2008. Photo credit: Sonja Seher, courtesy of NCC.

Palouse Land Trust — Moscow, ID

Palouse Land Trust made many improvements this summer to their Idler's Rest Nature Preserve at the base of Moscow Mountain in Idaho. This construction enlarged and improved the parking area, added an ADA-accessible vault toilet, built a universal access trail, and upgraded signage.



Payette Land Trust — McCall, ID

Payette Land Trust board members and executive director Craig Utter met with Idaho Governor Brad Little this summer on the shores of Payette Lake to discuss conservation within the Payette River Basin. The purpose of the Payette River Basin (PRB) Initiative is to utilize conservation easements to permanently conserve portions of the Basin which hold natural, recreational, agricultural, and hydrological resource value. More specifically, the Goal of the PRB initiative is to conserve a connected corridor from the Payette Lake inlet to Cabarton Bridge along the main stem of the North Fork Payette River. This effort will allow for access, recreation and movement of both people and wildlife within the corridor, while conserving the existing natural beauty and water quality.



Prickly Pear Land Trust — Helena, MT

Earlier this month, Montana Governor Steve Bullock, along with the Natural Resource Damage Program and Attorney General Tim Fox, solidified the partnership between all of the groups working to make the Prickly Pear Creek Greenway in East Helena a reality. PPLT now has a potential funding source for creating open lands and a trail system around the town and on former American Smelting and Refining Company lands. There is still a long way to go, but things are happening!



Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation — Missoula, MT

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) recently announced two new public access projects in Montana. In August, in coordination with Lewis and Clark County, the Dan Barrett family, Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest, and many other partners, 442 acres of prime wildlife and riparian habitat along Montana's Rocky Mountain Front are now permanently protected and in the public's hands. Called the Falls Creek project, it greatly improves access to more than 26,000 acres of public land containing prime elk habitat beyond it. In October, RMEF announced a 160-acre addition to the Mount Haggin Wildlife Management Area near Anaconda, which is the largest wildlife management area in Montana. This project was made possible by a conservation-minded landowner and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks.



Teton Regional Land Trust — Driggs, ID

Teton Regional Land Trust recently secured another \$1,000,000 grant from North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This grant will be used to protect more than 1,700 acres of the region's waterways and wetlands like the conserved property in this photo that was protected with a previous NAWCA grant.



The Nature Conservancy — Idaho

Beaver mimicry projects could be key to restoring wetlands. The Nature Conservancy is working with researchers, wildlife officials, and others on several projects in Idaho and Montana to build structures that mimic actual beaver dams, trying to solve stream problems and recruit beavers back into the system to restore wetlands. One project in Idaho is located on Tygee Creek, a tributary of Henry's Lake. Within two to three weeks of building the structure, ponds returned. Researchers will be monitoring this and other sites to see the effects on water temperature and availability.



Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust — Pocatello, ID

Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust (SSLT) just released a short film celebrating a new project in Mink Creek Canyon with the Egley family. Kelly Conde, SSLT's dedicated and driven Conservation Manager, first met Kent Egley in May 2017. That day, they toured his property and discussed what a conservation easement might look like. Now, more than two years later, the ink is dry and Kent's family land will be protected forever. The film project was assisted by a Heart of the Rockies capacity grant. You can check it out on SSLT's YouTube channel.

The Nature Conservancy — Montana

The Nature Conservancy in Montana announced in October the arrival of Amy Croover as their new state director. Croover brings more than a decade of leadership in policy, government relations, and economic and resource strategy to the position. She is a visionary leader with strong ties to Montana's landscapes and people. Croover joins TNC from her previous position at Business Oregon, the state's economic development department. She brings a strong understanding of what drives economies and the role TNC can play in supporting a healthy and resilient nature-based economy. But she's no stranger to Montana. Croover worked for Montana's senior U.S. Senator Jon Tester for seven years, handling Native American affairs and focusing on resource conservation and the nexus of Montana's native people and the state's lands and waters. She is based out of TNC's Missoula office.



The Nature Conservancy — Wyoming

The Nature Conservancy in Wyoming is celebrating 30 years of conservation in the Cowboy State. Over the past three decades, TNC has worked with landowners to protect more than a million acres and 1,500 river miles across the state.

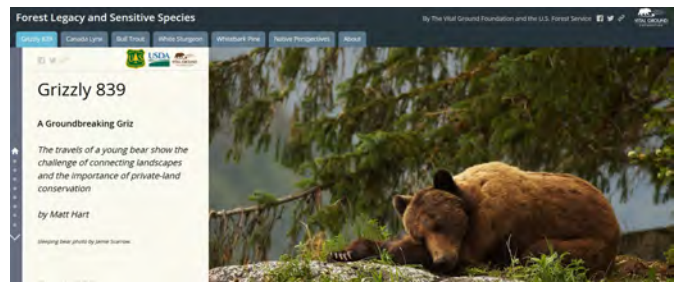


Trust for Public Land — Bozeman, MT

In October, the Trust for Public Land announced completion of two new projects in northwest Montana that permanently protect and secure public access to more than 27,000 acres. The projects are in partnership with Stimson Lumber Company, the US Forest Service, and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and utilized Land and Water Conservation funds and Forest Legacy Program funds. The Beavertail to Beavermouth project is 5,472 acres east of Missoula, and the Kootenai Forestlands project covers 22,295 acres near Libby.

Vital Ground Foundation — Missoula, MT

What stories light your conservation fire? Is it the tale of one animal, like the footloose Grizzly 839 who crossed highways and home sites while wandering through western Montana? Or is it the story told by data, by the dots on a map that tell the fate of a species or the progress made in saving it? However you



find inspiration, those stories are just a click away. Over the past two years, Vital Ground staff have partnered with the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program on a groundbreaking Story Map project. The result, now available online to the public, is an interactive six-part profile of threatened and endangered species and how forest conservation projects—like those that Forest Legacy and Vital Ground take on—benefit those species. You can check it out at <https://arcgis.com/1CP1L5>



Wood River Land Trust — Hailey, ID

Wood River Land Trust will premiere their new stunning film "Home" on December 10 in Ketchum as they celebrate their 25th anniversary. The short film is narrated by Mariel Hemingway and captures why the community loves the Wood River Valley of Idaho and how they can protect it forever. This project was assisted by a Heart of the Rockies capacity grant.



Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust — Cheyenne, WY

Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust just launched a new ArcGIS Story Map. In partnership with Heart of the Rockies Initiative, the land trust has been collecting landowner stories, photos, and video to tell the story of conservation, wildlife, and agriculture in Wyoming. This Story Map is the final product, capturing the spirit of their conservation work. You can check it out at <https://arcgis.com/SDHPS0>



High Divide Collaborative's Fall Celebration held in Montana's Madison Valley

Photo by cfboyer.com/LightHawk

The High Divide Coordinating Committee put together a *Celebration of Community and Conservation in the High Divide* in Ennis, Montana, on September 18.

This is the sixth year a broad array of stakeholders from Montana and Idaho gathered to celebrate local-driven conservation successes.

We started the beautiful blue-sky day with a field tour to a new public access site on the Madison River that was funded through our successful High Divide Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) applications.

Landowner Roger Lang and Dillon BLM Field Manager Cornie Hudson led us on a windy tour of the 307-acre property that is now providing walk-in access to more

than four miles of the river. The property is adjacent to other BLM lands and conservation easements held by TNC and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and is across the river from the Wall Creek Wildlife Management Area.

Mr. Lang and The Nature Conservancy bought the property in 2000 to prevent encroaching subdivisions that would erase this habitat used by wintering elk and mule deer.

BLM purchased the property late last year using LWCF funds that had originally been proposed for a different property on the river, but which fell through.

The Madison River is a treasured fishery and sees a lot of fishing pressure in full season. This walk-in and wade-only section will provide a

bit of a relief valve to that pressure. Funds from the Madison River Foundation also made the project possible.

While on tour, we received messages from U.S. Senator Tester (D-MT), U.S. Senator Daines (R-MT), and U.S. Congressman Gianforte (R-MT), all recognizing the High Divide Collaborative as an example of authentic and successful collaboration that is making durable conservation impacts in our landscape.

After the tour, we got out of the wind and gathered at El Western Resort for lunch, networking with colleagues, and hearing an update on other LWCF projects around the region.

Mike Mueller from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation shared



On the field tour, Roger Lang points out Alex Diekmann Peak in the Madison Range that lines the east side of Madison Valley. The peak honors Alex Diekmann who was a project manager for the Trust for Public Land (TPL). In his 16 years with TPL, he worked on 55 projects protecting more than 100,000 acres, from Taylor Fork to Haskill Basin. Alex died in 2016 of cancer at age 52. President Trump signed the bill naming the peak in February 2018. The bill was championed by all three members of Montana's congressional delegation and a big cohort of friends and colleagues.

some of the successful projects working with landowners of inholdings in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. Monica Zimmerman of the Bureau of Land Management in Idaho talked with us about some of the successes, and challenges, of completing projects in the southern part of the High Divide.

Additionally, the Coordinating Committee held an in-person meeting on September 17, reviewing the status of the Collaborative, discussing roles of the committee and the coordina-

tor, and looking at what is next for the Collaborative. They view the working group model as effective and sustainable for generating collective action around the High Divide Collaborative's shared priorities.

Rural communities throughout the High Divide landscape have long histories of working in local partnerships to address conservation issues. The High Divide Collaborative scales those efforts up to a larger landscape perspective.

The Collaborative is an effective partnership of landowners, local community leaders, public land managers, state wildlife agencies, scientists, and conservation groups.

We bring together over 200 people from 80 organizations to catalyze conservation in the High Divide of Montana and Idaho and collectively work toward shared values. The Heart of the Rockies Initiative plays a key role in facilitating and coordinating the group's efforts.

High Divide Collaborative awarded with 2019 Catalyst Fund Grant

The Network for Landscape Conservation announced their inaugural Landscape Conservation Catalyst Fund grant awards in August, and the High Divide Collaborative was one of 14 recipients across the U.S. The Network recognizes a fundamental shift occurring in land conservation: "from piecemeal and top-down conservation to a more holistic, horizontal, and

inclusive approach to conserving landscapes that sustain us." The Fund provides critical capacity to move these collaborative processes forward. Heart of the Rockies serves a coordinating role for the High Divide Collaborative, and we are thrilled and humbled to be a part of this first cohort of Catalyst Fund grantees.

Foundation Tour

In September, Heart of the Rockies Initiative hosted a tour for Turner Foundation program officer Troy Ettel with partners from Five Valleys Land Trust, Bitter Root Land Trust, Vital Ground Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Montana Association of Land Trusts, and Land Trust Alliance. Participants showcased partnerships, collective action, and compelling conservation and community impact on stops at Legacy Point on Mount Dean Stone and in the Burnt Fork Drainage in the Bitterroot Valley. They also demonstrated the need for dedicated wildlife-related funding.



Engaging in the Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent

Heart of the Rockies Initiative was honored to be invited recently to play a role on the steering committee for the Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent. Project Coordinator Emily Harkness is taking on that role. The Roundtable brings people together to sustain and enhance community, culture, and conservation in the Crown of the Continent ecosystem.

This is an 18 million-acre landscape anchored by Glacier-Waterton International Peace Park and the Bob Marshall Wilderness. It is home to headwaters of three major river systems and includes parts of Montana, Alberta, and British Columbia.

The 9th Annual Roundtable was held in Polson, Montana, in September with the theme “Connecting Land and Culture.” The conference summary reports that “the conference featured 52

speakers and engendered discussion on issues from whitebark pine to native salmonids to tourism to holistic health. A common thread across presentations was recognition of the influence of culture on ecological outcomes and the need to include native perspectives and traditional ecological knowledge in current research and management endeavors.”

Land trusts from the Heart of the Rockies Initiative were on a panel that enabled them to talk about their role both locally and on a landscape-scale, and to showcase the unique projects they are working on that support the needs, health, and socio-ecological issues of the communities they serve.

Panelists were Paul Travis of Flathead Land Trust, Richard Klafki of Nature Conservancy of Canada, and Regan Plumb of



(L to R) Regan Plumb, Paul Travis, Richard Klafki.

Kaniksu Land Trust, and Emily Harkness was moderator.

Heart of the Rockies’ executive director Gary Burnett was also a panelist, on the Preserving Connections on Private Land panel. He spoke of the locally-led conflict reduction strategies for agricultural producers in the High Divide who are impacted by carnivores like grizzly bears. Many local communities have identified the need for expanded carcass pick-up programs and composting sites. Heart of the Rockies is assisting in the search for long-term program assistance and funding.

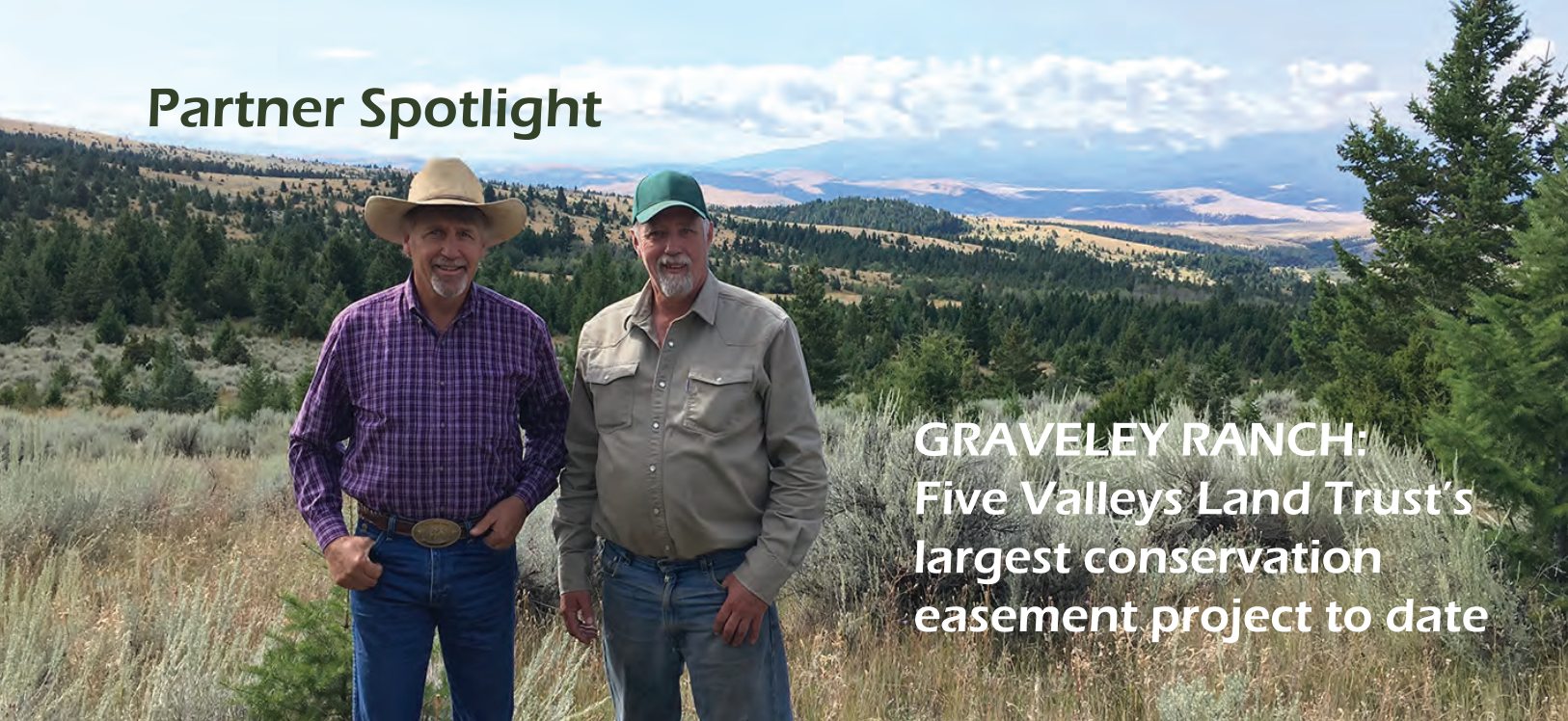


Presenting at the Land Trust Alliance Rally

Gary Burnett, executive director for the Heart of the Rockies, presented at the Land Trust Alliance Rally in Raleigh, North Carolina, in October. He was part of the Network for Landscape Conservation’s discussion on building effective landscape-scale partnerships.

Pictured is Gary (far right) leading a break-out discussion where participants strategized with each other on steps to success, tools of the trade, and how to overcome specific challenges in their own landscapes.

Partner Spotlight



GRAVELEY RANCH: Five Valleys Land Trust's largest conservation easement project to date

Story and photo provided by Five Valleys Land Trust – Missoula, Montana

Patience is a virtue, they say. This past June, perseverance paid off when the Graveley family and Five Valleys finalized our biggest conservation easement project to date: The Graveley Ranch project.

The Graveley Ranch is a place of windswept beauty. Located outside of Garrison, and visible from Interstate 90, the ranch rolls from the East Garnet Mountains into juniper-sagebrush steppes and high montane grasslands, down into conifers stands and tracks of riparian habitat along Brock Creek, Bear Gulch, Warm Springs Creek, and the Clark Fork River. Tucked away into these hills, a spring bubbles into a large waterfall feature—a rarity among the coolies and sage of this region.

Nearly a decade ago, brothers Shane and Sandy Graveley contacted Five Valleys about placing a conservation easement their 5,100-acre cattle ranch. Their vision was big: use the proceeds from the sale of a conservation easement to purchase a neighboring 3,100-acre ranch, and then protect that as well. More than once, the

adjacent ranch came up for sale, but the chips just didn't fall right. Then, last year, it was placed on the market again. This time, with the help of The Conservation Fund, who purchased it and held it while Five Valleys and the Graveleys worked out the details of the easements and funding, the long-held dream was made possible, and over 8,200 acres of working lands and wildlife habitat were protected in perpetuity.

The Graveley brothers raise cattle on their land, which has been in their family for four generations. The variety of habitat types serve more than just happy cows, though. The land also provides for elk, mule deer, antelope, black and grizzly bear, and several Montana Species of Concern, including three species of bat, boreal owl, long-billed curlew, and westslope cutthroat trout.

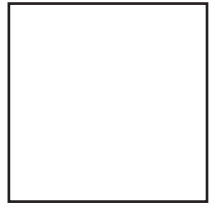
The project also protects over three miles of Warm Spring Creek, an important recruitment fishery for the Clark Fork River. The ranch also provides habitat connectivity between the Upper Clark Fork and Flint Creek

Valleys, through proximity to several nearby, privately conserved ranches, and BLM and USFS lands.

The richness of the Graveley Ranch is not something the Graveleys keep to themselves, however. For the last 22 years, they have allowed hunting on their land, through Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks' (FWP) Block Management program. With the finalization of their conservation easements, that access will now be possible in perpetuity.

The landmark project required not only patience, but strong relationships between the Graveley family, Five Valleys, The Conservation Fund, Montana FWP, and the funding partners that made the project possible, including the Montana Natural Resource Damage Program, Heart of the Rockies Initiative, and private donations. Five Valleys is grateful to the Graveley family for their vision, patience and commitment. Thanks to their generosity, this part of the Little Blackfoot will remain rugged and beautiful ranchland for generations to come.

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HEART OF THE ROCKIES INITIATIVE

a network of local land trusts working together for better local results

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.*