



Montana Association
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**MALT MONDAY
UPDATE
September 23, 2013**

Thanks, Mike Scholz

As we get ready to slip into October the Travelers for Open Land staff and advisory committee will begin making preparations for the fifth annual Travelers for Open Land grant awards. Since 2009, TFOL has awarded \$148,365 in grants to fund 20 MALT-member conservation easement projects that have an enduring impact on the Montana landscape.

Mike Scholz not only led the effort that created the Travelers for Open Land program, he has privately and personally helped fund the grant awards and, in 2013, has been a generous financial contributor to the TFOL ongoing administrative requirements and TFOL's part-time staff position. 2013 TFOL grant applications will be distributed in about a month, and we have Mike Scholz to thank for that opportunity. THANKS, MIKE!

MALT Meeting Agenda Distributed This Week

The finalized meeting agenda for the MALT Oct. 30 meeting in Bozeman will be distributed to the membership later this week. The MALT board of directors has a couple of possible late-breaking agenda items to discuss during its Sept. 23 conference call. The Oct. 30 meeting will be held at the Bozeman Library and will start at 10:00 AM. Call Glenn at 490-1659 with any questions or comments.

2013 Rally Offered Fun, Information, Recognition

The National Land Trust Conference, aka Rally, provided an opportunity for land trust staff, board members and organizations to grow personally and professionally, created a chance for participants to obtain expertise on multiple topics from multiple experts, gave a chance to discuss ideas with peers, plus offered a chance to sample some terrific music, food and culture in New Orleans.

Rally, held Sept. 17-19 a block from the French Quarter, actually started on Sept. 15 for some participants with a leadership summit. In addition to special seminars and training for boards, Sept. 16 was set aside (for MALT) for a half-day state association meeting. As always, Montana and Montanans were a consistent presence throughout the Rally planning, execution and within the two days of workshops.

Special recognition went to Bitter Root Land Trust and Flathead Land Trust as Montana's newest accredited land trusts. Each newly accredited land trusts was feted during the plenary session. See the next page of this update for info on another Montanan who received recognition at Rally.

(Photo: Linda Mead of D&R Greenway Land Trust in New Jersey and Andy Baur of Prickly Pear Land Trust discuss conservation priorities in Jackson Square during the Sept. 16 Leadership Summit.)



BRIEFLY

The City of Bozeman has created a "community benefit matrix" to help identify and fund projects proposed through the trails, parks and open space bond program. The new program was created through a voter-approved bond measure in November 2012, and the Bozeman City Commission approved a process to select and fund proposals earlier in September. Read more in the [Bozeman Chronicle](#).

Prickly Pear Land Trust will host its annual Harvest Moon Banquet and Auction in Helena on Saturday, Sept. 28, and the [Helena Independent Record](#) reports the event will feature an intriguing convergence of conservation, art, craftsmanship and history. *(Helena IR Photo)*



The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has purchased land near the Big and Little Snowy Mountains that will improve access to nearly 18,000 acres of public land. The [Great Falls Tribune](#) reports the 40-acre acquisition by RMEF is a "big win for hunters and members of the public." *(Tribune Photo)*



Rock Ringling's Advocacy Saluted at Rally

During the Sept. 18 plenary session at Rally in New Orleans, Land Trust Alliance Executive Vice President Mary Pope Hutson recognized the new accredited land trusts, thanked main speaker Barry Lopez, provided an update on Alliance and land trust policy and congressional efforts, and then paused for a special, unprecedented announcement. To the pleasant surprise of the 1,500 Rally participants gathered in the room, Pope Hutson proclaimed that Rock Ringling, Montana Land Trust Managing Director, was being honored for his years of advocacy work in support of land conservation. It was a stirring proclamation by Pope Hutson, a call to arms of sorts, and a deeply deserving tribute to a land trust pioneer, leader, innovator and force. Here is Pope Hutson's introduction of this special award:

Defense is important but right now, a good offense is the best defense. We are at a critical moment in land trust history - an inflection point - which brings me to our collective role in building broad public support for conservation.

Some land trusts see working on "policy issues" as beyond the scope of their work, saying they are better at working one-on-one with landowners and others in the community. But engaging at all levels with elected officials is one of the best investments of time and resources a land trust can make in these times of uncertainty. In fact, those one-on-one relationships with staff and policy members make land trusts who have intimate knowledge of their communities such important and effective advocates for conservation.

In recent years, there have been high correlations between changes in public policy and conservation achievements at the local, state and national levels. But now, we can't take public support for conservation for granted. In 2005 we faced intense scrutiny and proposed cuts to federal incentives for protecting land. The land trust community united in opposition and established new standards for quality and accountability to avert the crisis.

We are now dealing with multiple challenges that affect our conservation work: partisan gridlock that has the Farm Bill due to expire in 12 days. The fiscal cliff again this year with government running out of borrowing authority, agencies without any approved appropriations - and not to mention uncertainty about charitable deductions and tax reform in general... you might ask... What are we doing about it?

The Land Trust Alliance has committed over the next three years to double its resources dedicated to building an advocacy network second to none, engaging with Members of Congress and their staff on tax policy, strengthening agency funding for conservation and working locally to seed more local ballot measures across America. This requires a shift, a cultural shift, and this is where you come in - we need your help - we are a community that must engage on behalf of others, and the next three months is a critical period for the land conservation community. To ensure our continued success, we must all engage our public representatives who occupy a seat at the table as they deliberate changing laws and policies that are critical to our work.

The Land Trust Alliance Policy Team stands ready to lead and assist you in the work together - together for the land - In that vein....

Today, we recognize and celebrate extraordinary leadership in the ingenious and purposeful engagement that is a model for all of us if we are to be relevant for the future - elected officials are busy people and so are we - but they do serve their constituents. One such constituent made engaging his Member of Congress a number one priority.

Rock Ringling of the Montana Land Reliance is closing in on one million acres of land protection in that state, most of which are donated conservation easements. Rock knew that to meet MLR's ambitious goals, they would either need a gold mine - or help from the government to make the tax benefit of donations more meaningful to the ranchers who own most of Montana's land. Rock had a Senator on the Senate Finance Committee, so he went to work 14 years ago to make sure that Senator Baucus would always have the Montana Land Reliance on his mind. Rock made sure the Senator met his easement donors. Rock took the Senator's aides fishing. Rock worked out an easement with the Senator's cousin.

So Rock had been working with Senator Baucus on getting a better tax incentive for donations for years before the Washington Post ran a series of stories about how conservation easements were a scam for the rich in 2004 and 2005. When that happened, and some Senators seemed dead-set and determined to stop all deductions for conservation easements, Senator Baucus was able to say... "wait a minute, I know about these conservation easements - and they are a good thing."

So the Senate was poised to take away most tax deductions for conservation - but instead, they ended up giving us an expanded tax deduction. No one played a bigger role in making that happen than Rock Ringling. Please join me in celebrating one man's extraordinary work on behalf of our entire community - with over 11 million acres of land under easement and close to 100,000 easements we owe a great deal of gratitude to a giant in our midst...

Rock received a standing ovation and an award, and delivered some poignant words of his own, with an emotional and personal close to his remarks. The entire Montana Association of Land Trusts membership thanks the Land Trust Alliance and Mary Pope Hutson for their recognition of our peerless Montana advocacy giant, and salute Rock for his achievements and leadership. *(Photo Courtesy of the Land Trust Alliance)*

