

Out West

A report to The Laundress and John Mayer

Feb. 1, 2018

The membership and staff of the Montana Association of Land Trusts express appreciation to The Laundress and John Mayer for their partnership in and support for the Out West program. This has been an exciting and fun project for the Montana land trust community.

As of January 2018, MALT has received \$29,360 from proceeds of Out West product sales, with the partnership extended through September 2018.

This report illustrates the calibre of Montana private land conservation and demonstrates the diversity of work and value Montana land trusts bring to Montana's economy, landscape, outdoor recreation, healthy communities, and quality of life. Each section highlights one land trust and one project, with a link to the land trust's website. MALT's disbursement of Out West funds to each of MALT's 12 members will directly fund these types of examples and help achieve conservation that makes Montana a better place to live, work and recreate. Thank you to The Laundress and John Mayer for inviting MALT to participate in the Out West partnership. We look forward to working with you in the future.

*Glenn Marx
Montana Association of Land Trusts*



Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Trout Unlimited, and Kinross Gold worked together to conserve land and water north of Yellowstone National Park in the Paradise Valley on historic mining property. The Mineral Hill Bear Creek Conservation Easement includes a conservation easement held by the RMEF and donated instream water rights held by TU, and this accomplishment was celebrated on August 17, 2017 in an event that included the Montana Congressional Delegation, Governor Steve Bullock, Yellowstone National Park Superintendent Dan Went, Kinross Gold officials and leaders from the conservation project partners. The project benefits open land, native trout fisheries, and wildlife habitat, and during the project ceremony celebration it was hailed by the Yellowstone National Park Superintendent as "A great day for the ecosystem." RMEF is a national land trust based in Missoula. (Left to right) Chris Wood, Trout Unlimited President and CEO; David Allen, RMEF President and CEO; Congressman Greg Gianforte; Superintendent of Yellowstone National Park Dan Wenk; Paul Rollinson, Kinross President and CEO; Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior David Bernhardt; Senator Jon Tester; Governor Steve Bullock; Senator Steve Daines. RMEF photo



Montana Land Reliance; The Conservation Fund

The Delaney family (owners of the 44 Ranch in north central Montana), **The Montana Land Reliance**, and funding partners **The Conservation Fund** and the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program teamed up to conserve 18,000 acres of important sage grouse habitat. The Conservation Fund is a national land trust with an office in Missoula, and The Montana Land Reliance, based in Helena with additional regional Montana offices, is Montana's largest land trust. The conservation



easement and stewardship practices by the Delaney family allows for continued ranch operations and creates permanent conservation of vital sagebrush habitat. The cooperation among two MALT members - The Montana Land Reliance and The

Conservation Fund - helped produce the first Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program conservation project and earned the Delaneys MLR's prestigious 2017 William F. Long Conservation Award. *Montana Land Reliance photo of the Delaney family.*

Flathead Land Trust

One of Montana's most important wetlands for sandhill cranes and other migratory waterbirds is now conserved thanks to **Flathead Land Trust** and supporters of the West Valley Wetlands project. Flathead Land Trust is moving forward to permanently conserve these West Valley Wetlands – almost 400 acres of rich farmland with an exceptional 45-acre pothole wetland that is part of an ecologically important area for birds and wildlife in the West Valley

just northwest of Kalispell. FLT, a local land trust based in Kalispell, closed on the first part of the conservation project this fall and will close on the last part sometime in early 2018. The West Valley includes a complex of wetlands in



agricultural fields that support some of the highest numbers and diversity of wetland birds in the Flathead Valley. This includes the only known staging area for sandhill cranes in the Flathead Valley where hundreds of these magnificent birds can be viewed during their annual migration. And now, thanks to FLT and its supporters and funders, this area will be permanently conserved. *Photo by Steve Muller*

Vital Ground Foundation

The Vital Ground Foundation's focus is grizzly bear habitat and grizzly bear conservation, and the Alvord Lake Community Forest project is an excellent example of Vital Ground's purpose and goals. The Alvord Lake Community Forest combines grizzly bear habitat conservation with community goals, local cooperation, forest health and forest management, recreational public access and long-term stewardship of the property.

"The really wonderful benefit of Alvord Lake is not only is it a corridor for large carnivores such as grizzly bears and



smaller ones like wolverine and fisher, it's also a great place for migratory birds," explained Jessie Grossman, Community Forest Watch Coordinator for the Yaak Valley Forest Council. "It's in this really interesting area that connects the more urban area of Troy with the wildlands surrounding it." Vital Ground is a regional land trust headquartered in Missoula.

Photo of Alvord Lake by Adrienne Ingram

Prickly Pear Land Trust

The Peaks to Creeks project is community conservation at its best. **Prickly Pear Land Trust**, a local land trust based in Helena, has actively built and maintained trails and conserved open land for two decades. It recently debuted a new community conservation proposal named Peaks to Creeks, a project that combines a multitude of benefits for the Helena community and brings together diverse partners around conservation.

Benefits include trails and outdoor recreation, community youth natural resources

education, enhanced protection of Fort Harrison's mission, outdoor space for recovering veterans and family members, and conservation of Tenmile Creek and Sevenmile Creek. The national Land Trust Alliance has termed the Peaks to Creeks project one of the "top community conservation projects in the western US." *Prickly Pear Land Trust Photo*



The Nature Conservancy in Montana

For four decades, **The Nature Conservancy** has worked across Montana to protect critical lands and waters on which all life depends. They have conserved over 1.2 million acres of land through a combination of easements and acquisition, including half a million acres of forest within the Crown of the Continent. These forests are vital to people and nature. They sustain livelihoods, recreation opportunities and some of the last strongholds for wide-ranging wildlife like Canada lynx and grizzlies. Yet, these forests face daunting pressures from climate change and a growing human footprint. Over the past 20 years, the Conservancy has been stitching our Montana forests back together—reconnecting critical habitat and removing the checkerboard pattern of ownership—so that future generations can continue to work and play in these special places. The Conservancy is committed to combining rigorous science and community input to develop management plans that will protect and restore these forests for the long-term. By listening to and partnering with others, the Conservancy is mapping out a future where resilient Montana forests enable nature and people to thrive. *Steven Gnam photo*



Trust for Public Land

The Trust for Public Land works throughout Montana and the US, and focuses on “Creating Parks and Protecting Land for People.” **The Trust for Public Land** certainly accomplishes that in Montana, and Haskill Basin is a perfect example of protecting lands for people. Haskill Basin, near the city of Whitefish and Whitefish Lake, provides 75 percent of Whitefish’s drinking supply and was prime for development. TPL worked with the landowner - Stoltze Land & Lumber Company - the city of Whitefish, Whitefish residents, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and others to conserve over 3,000 acres in a way that protects drinking water, continues forest health, maintains wood products jobs and economic opportunity, conserves wildlife habitat, maintains public access and recreational opportunity in a way that allows everyone in the community to win. “This is truly a remarkable achievement and a win-win for everyone,” said Dick Dolan of The Trust for Public Land. “Almost five square miles of beautiful forestland will be preserved forever in the backyard of Whitefish, and remain part of the vital local timber economy. *Randy Beacham photo*



Kaniksu Land Trust

Kaniksu Land Trust, based in Sandpoint, ID, with conservation efforts in portions of western Montana, recently launched Pine Street Woods, a community forest concept that has evolved into KLT’s signature project. Pine Street Woods is a 160-acre forest just outside Sandpoint. It was on the market, and KLT is raising funds to purchase it and manage it as a community recreational gem. The land trust’s goal is for Pine Street Woods to become “Your future favorite place to hike, bike, walk, cross country ski, snowshoe and enjoy nature.” Pine Street Woods is an area of unspoiled forests, open meadows and beautiful vistas. KLT envisions the property becoming a place where the public will come to recreate, unwind, explore, and attend any number of programs. *Kaniksu Land Trust photo*



Five Valleys Land Trust

Mount Dean Stone is **Five Valleys Land Trust’s** ongoing community conservation project that brings tremendous outdoor recreation benefits for the people and economy of Missoula. FVLT is based in Missoula and works within a ten county area on conservation easements, trails, the protection of working lands, and more. The 4,200-acre Mount Dean Stone project encompasses the area near Missoula’s south side and when completed will form a 180-degree arc of conservation lands around Missoula. Major project partners include The Nature Conservancy in Montana, the City of Missoula, Run Wild Missoula and MTB Missoula, in addition to many partnering private landowners and dozens of community members. “This community wants more trails and more access to outdoor recreation out the door. The trails we currently have near town are a core part of our unique quality of life, but they are increasingly crowded and predominantly on the north side of town. Our community is anticipating massive growth in the decades ahead and this is a chance for our open space infrastructure to keep pace with growth and maintain our quality of life and sense of place,” said Grant Kier, Five Valleys’ former Executive Director. *Five Valleys Land Trust photo*



Bitter Root Land Trust

Bitter Root Land Trust, the 61-Bar Ranch owners Dick and Karen Smith, and key supporters and funders worked together to permanently conserve this 503-acre Burnt Fork drainage ranch. **Bitter Root Land Trust**, based in Hamilton, works within the entire Bitterroot Valley and is helping the valley conserve its agricultural and open land legacy. The 61-Bar Ranch conservation easement adds nearly 25% additional protected acreage in the Burnt Fork



neighborhood just outside of Stevensville. The 503 acres of working lands—with 98% prime soils—ensures agricultural practices will continue and protects “species of greatest conservation need” like the great blue heron, Sandhill crane, bald eagle, evening grosbeak,

Clark’s nutcracker, Lewis’ woodpecker, and pileated woodpecker. Multiple streams on 61-Bar Ranch support a matrix of wetland and riparian habitats that sustain these native wildlife populations. Not only does this project bring total acres conserved to nearly 1,900 in the Burnt Fork, it also protects open views from Eastside Highway—a highly traveled two-lane road used by locals and visitors alike. Two additional ranches will connect other existing BRLT conservation easements nearby, creating a total of 2,658 acres of working lands in the Burnt Fork drainage. BRLT looks forward to celebrating their completion in 2019. *Bitter Root Land Trust photo*

Gallatin Valley Land Trust

Gallatin Valley Land Trust works in the greater Gallatin area, including the Paradise Valley, and has led the Main Street to the Mountains trails system in Bozeman. **Gallatin Valley Land Trust** also works extensively with landowners to conserve farm and ranch ground, wildlife habitat and open lands. The LF Dairy and Kamps Seed Farm conservation easements are excellent examples of GVLT’s commitment to local agriculture and the local community. Both the LF Dairy and Kamps Seed Farm are GVLT



partnerships with long time Gallatin Valley farming families in the Churchill area, west of Bozeman and Belgrade. Both projects are adjacent to other GVLT conserved lands and will contribute to a large, and growing, block of open land that will remain viable for agriculture into the future.

The LF Dairy and Kamps Seed Farm projects are valuable because of their exceptionally productive soils, the families’ desires to continue agriculture in the area, the proximity of the properties to the Gallatin River and rapidly encroaching development, and the scenic benefits to the public from popular County roads. Both of these projects are longtime ag operations: The LF Dairy is a 588 acre property that has been owned and operated by multiple generations of the Flikkema family since 1955. The Kamps Seed Farm, 488 acres, is directly adjacent to the LF Dairy and other conserved lands. The Kamps family purchased the land in 1934 and the 5th generation is currently working on the farm. *Gallatin Valley Land Trust photo*

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Montana Association of Land Trusts

The Montana Association of Land Trusts staff and membership again extends its sincere appreciation to The Laundress and John Mayer for your support of Montana private land conservation. The purpose of this report was to provide examples of land trust conservation projects and illustrate the value Montana and Montanans receive from Montana’s land trust community. Please let us know if you have any questions or comments about this report, Montana land trusts, or Montana private conservation. Best wishes, and thank you again.

