



Montana Association of Land Trusts
MALT MONDAY UPDATE Feb. 12, 2018

Conservation Easements and Commercial Opportunity

by Glenn Marx, MALT Executive Director

For quite a while the Blackfoot Challenge

Conservation Easement Workgroup has expressed an interest in the question of conservation easements and commercial opportunity. The topic gets to the core of one of private land conservation's more intriguing conflicts: Helping keep people on the land and at the same time restricting some uses - perpetually - of the property.

The next Workgroup meeting is Feb. 23, from 10:00 AM to noon in the Helmville Community Club. The Blackfoot Challenge Workgroup includes a nice blend of perspectives and presents a good format to explore thorny conservation easement questions like this.

The email invitation to the meeting reports that "the purpose of this meeting is to explore how and where we can increase flexibility in conservation easements to allow for the pursuit of commercial activities that don't compromise conservation values. We hope that easement holding entities could invite a landowner they have worked with on this issue to join them (or at least come prepared to share the issues they've expressed/that you've worked on together related to this topic). What are you struggling with? What has worked and what hasn't? How have you been able to move the needle forward?"

That's a lot to cover in two hours. My assessment has always been that no two conservation easements are alike because no two landowners and no two properties are alike. It's also true that while land trusts are consistent, no two land trusts are identical. Two accredited land trusts with outstanding reputations and impeccable governance could approach the issue of commercial opportunity within conservation easements from two very different perspectives with two very different results, and both be correct. And that's okay. Flexibility within land trusts is admirable, provided that flexibility is based on principle and mission. And, of course, Standards and Practices.

Land Trust Stewards Gather at Rock Creek

by Ryan Chapin, Five Valleys Land Trust

Stewardship professionals from around the region met at the Five Valleys Land Trust's Rock Creek Confluence Property on Thursday, February 8 for a day-long retreat. More than twenty participants gathered to discuss challenges, successes and the future of their organization's stewardship programs. Story-telling, technical advice, hiking, and even a campfire made it into the day's agenda. The feeling of camaraderie and a laid back atmosphere was apparent throughout the day. It was decided that a second annual stewardship day retreat is in order, but the exact shape the event ultimately takes is unknown.

Photo: (Left to right) Back row: Matt Bell (Montana Land Reliance), Mitch Doherty (Vital Ground), Nick Norton (Palouse Land Trust), Gary Burnett (Heart of the Rockies), Peter Brown (Gallatin Valley Land Trust), Mark Schiltz (Montana Land Reliance), Ryan Hunter (Flathead Land Trust), Will Trimbath (Montana Land Reliance), Alice Jones (Five Valleys Land Trust), Sara Schmidt (Blackfoot Challenge), Lucas Cain (Gallatin Valley Land Trust), Kevin League (MT FWP), Jenny Tollefson (Five Valleys Land Trust), Nate Kopp (Prickly Pear Land Trust). Front row: Regan Plumb (Kaniksu Land Trust), Steve Kloetzel (The Nature Conservancy), Chris DeForest (Inland Northwest Land Trust), Ryan Chapin (Five Valleys Land Trust), Bray Beltran (Heart of the Rockies), Travis Vincent (Prickly Pear Land Trust). (Thanks to Ryan Chapin for organizing the event and for the info.)



Missoula Examines Open Land Benefits; Considers Potomac Conservation

The Missoula County Parks, Trails and Open Lands Program is gathering information about the benefits of the program, and is also examining a proposal to help fund conservation of a 596-acre ranch in the Potomac area.



The Missoulian reported on a Feb. 6 open house held by the program to discuss how the city and county plan for open space recreational areas in the future. Attendees filled out questionnaires, interacted with program staff, and learned more about the program's vision and blueprint.

In addition to the open house, the county commission discussed tapping county open land bonds to support purchasing a proposed conservation easement on a Potomac area ranch.

From the [Missoulian article](#): "This project would conserve working lands as well as wildlife habitat and open space," said Kali Becher, the natural resource specialist for the county's Parks, Trails and Open Lands program. "There is a small wetland area in the lower portions of the ranch. It's currently undeveloped land and contains a lot of agricultural land and valuable timber land."

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"I NEVER MARRIED. THAT'S WHY I'M LIVING SO LONG."

102-YEAR-OLD BUTTE RESIDENT FRANK KARVAN,
EXPLAINING THE SECRET TO HIS LONGEVITY

NUMBER OF THE WEEK

\$2.4 BILLION; 16%; 57%

AMOUNT OF **2017 USFS WILDFIRE FIGHTING COSTS**;
PERCENTAGE OF USFS BUDGET ALLOCATED TOWARD
FIREFIGHTING COSTS IN 1995;
PERCENTAGE OF USFS BUDGET ALLOCATED TOWARD
FIREFIGHTING COSTS IN 2017

PHOTO OF THE WEEK

FLATHEAD LAND TRUST PHOTO USED TO PROMOTE
THE INTRO TO CONSERVATION EASEMENTS CLASS
FOR REALTORS ON APRIL 12 IN KALISPELL. HARLEY
MUMMA PHOTO



Vital Ground Foundation Unveils New Logo



The **Vital Ground Foundation** has a new logo. The new logo is part of a larger rebranding process intended to draw new audiences to the organization, and the new logo features a familiar grizzly. Derived from acclaimed Montana artist Monte Dolack's painting, "The Great Bear," the logo's figure of a walking grizzly bear matches the bruin that adorns Vital Ground's popular charity license plate.

"We are fortunate to partner with Montana's best-known artist who has helped Vital Ground amplify our brand," said Kevin Rhoades, director of communications for Vital Ground. "Dolack's bear, alongside the stream and mountains in our new logo, should help a worldwide audience understand that connecting landscapes and protecting wildlife is at the epicenter of what we do."

Lewis and Clark County Still Working on Open Land Proposed Program Changes

The Lewis and Clark Open Land Program's Citizen Advisory Committee discussed proposed changes to the county's open land program application, review and approval process on Feb. 6, and voted to continue evaluating the proposed changes until the group meets again on March 6.

Christian Dietrich of The Montana Land Reliance proposed the county's review and decision-making process be consistent with other Montana county open land programs, and the advisory committee asked county legal staff to review the proposed language for consistency within the framework of the program.

Coming Up:

MALT Board of Directors
Upcoming Conference Call
2:00 PM, Feb. 19, March 5

Blackfoot Challenge Conservation
Easement Workgroup Meeting
Feb. 23, 10:00 AM
Helmville Community Club

Upcoming Land Trust Alliance Webinars:
Feb. 25 - Advanced Monitoring Skills

Lewis & Clark County CAC Meeting
Open Lands Program March 6, 5:30 PM
Room 226 City / County Building

Prickly Pear Land Trust
Annual Meeting, 5:30 PM, Feb. 15
Free Ceramics, Helena

Deadline for Cinnabar Foundation
Special Projects Grants - March 31

Forest Workshop for Professionals
April 9 - 11, Lubrecht State Forest

Land Trust Alliance Advocacy Days
April 9 - 11, Washington, DC

Intro To Conservation Easements
for Realtors, April 12, 9:30 - Noon
Flathead Land Trust

Heart of the Rockies Meeting
May 17 - 18, Sandpoint, ID