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**Visser Ranch Conserved: 779 acres protected west of Four Corners**

Gallatin Valley Land Trust (GVLT) has partnered with the Visser family to conserve their 779-acre ranch in the heart of the Gallatin Valley near Churchill, Montana, 11 miles west of Four Corners along Highway 84. A conservation easement was placed on the property ensuring that the beautiful and productive land will remain open and available for agriculture in perpetuity. Marge and Mel Visser currently graze horses on the property but the land is home to many other species throughout the year. The ranch contains rolling native grasslands suitable for a variety of grassland and upland bird species, raptors, and mule deer. The ranch also serves as transitional and winter habitat for a large herd of elk that spends a majority of the year on the Flying D Ranch to the south.

The property has been in the family since the 1940’s. Mel was born on the property and he and Marge have raised their family there as well. They have a deep connection to the land and were motivated to keep it in agriculture and open for wildlife as Gallatin County continues to see rapid development and conversion of open land. The conservation of this property adds to a significant concentration of protected lands in the Churchill/ Amsterdam area. Preserving farmland in large blocks helps to ensure a stable land base for agricultural operations and reduces conflict between farming and development. GVLT has worked with 23 different landowners in the Amsterdam and Churchill communities to help conserve 9,700 acres in the area.

The public will recognize and appreciate the protection of this highly scenic property. The conservation easement protects stunning views along 1 mile of Norris Rd., a popular drive for fishing or floating the Madison River.

A conservation easement limits the development of the property in perpetuity, ensuring that it will stay open for wildlife, available for agriculture, and scenic for the public to enjoy. This project would not have been possible without the unwavering commitment of the Visser family, who not only invested significant time and energy in the process, but also donated a substantial amount of development value through their conservation easement. The Visser easement was also funded through the Gallatin County Open Lands Program and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (a program of the USDA). Gallatin County voters chose to renew funding to the Open Lands Program in 2018.

**About Gallatin Valley Land Trust**

Gallatin Valley Land Trustconnects people, communities, and open lands through conservation of working farms and ranches, healthy rivers, and wildlife habitat, and the creation of trails in the Montana headwaters of the Missouri and Upper Yellowstone Rivers. For more information, visit [www.gvlt.org](http://www.gvlt.org).

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