

ONE MILLION ACRES



2017 ANNUAL REPORT

# ONE MILLION ACRES BY THE NUMBERS

# 62

Most easements in one year (2000)

# 854

Total number of easements

# 40,064

Largest protected property acreage



John Lambing

# 1,221

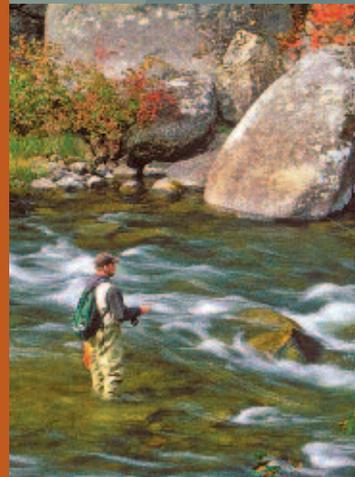
Average property acreage

# 1

Smallest protected property acreage

# .29

Cost in dollars to monitor one acre of property in 2017



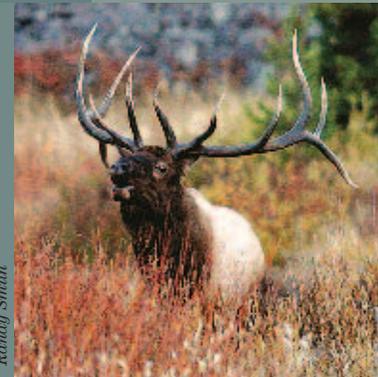
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# 293

Miles of blue- and red-ribbon trout streams protected

# 932,455

Total privately enhanced public acreage (MLR acreage adjacent to public lands)



Randy Smith

# 160

Median property acreage



# 377,258,803

Total ecosystem services value in dollars

# 98,324

Most acres in one year (2007)

The Montana Land Reliance partners with private landowners to permanently protect agricultural lands, fish and wildlife habitat, and open space.

The immediate accomplishments of MLR's conservation work are measured in miles of streambank preserved and acres of land protected.

The lasting benefits of MLR's work are the perpetuation of a lifestyle and an economy that rely on responsibly managed private land and the increasingly valuable Montana open spaces that will continue to nourish the spirit of future generations.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER  
CONNECTING THE DOTS

**IT IS NOT HARD TO IMAGINE** what some of Montana's most special places would have looked like without the long-term and persistent effort of The Montana Land Reliance (MLR). Places like the Smith River Canyon country could have been asphalt and houses instead of grass, trees, and grazers.

Montana's future is tied to the land and to the people who live on and manage it. MLR envisions a future with enduring landscapes that keep Montana's agricultural lands and communities healthy and flourishing over the generations.

On August 5, 2017, rancher and MLR Board member, Phil Rostad, took the stage in front of over 400 MLR landowners and supporters at the Million Acre Celebration on the Hilger Ranch near the Gates of the Mountains, took the pen, and to raucous cheers from the audience, signed a conservation easement on his family's Martinsdale ranch, pushing the total easement acreage held by MLR over the million-acre mark. The ranch that hosted the party is itself a part of that million acres.

One million acres. MLR has secured the most easement acres out of any land trust in the state and out of 25,692,063 total acres conserved nationwide, MLR is responsible

for four percent of the total. That's a big deal.

The moment Phil signed the easement papers was the culmination of four decades of hard work, unwavering vision, and persistent effort of the MLR Board, staff, and thousands of supporters. We've had setbacks, leaps forward, and thousands of cups of coffee around kitchen tables.

When I started with MLR in 1979, as the Treasurer and Secretary of the Board, I never imagined what we would accomplish. As I reflect on those decades and the organization's recent milestone, I do so with immense gratitude for the people and places that have gotten us here and for the collaborative nature of these efforts: voluntary participation, shared goals, pooled resources, and a deep commitment to place.

**MLR HAS THRIVED** and succeeded, even during lean years, because we understand the sacred connections between people and their places, and between working landscapes and public lands. We understand the power of relationships and trust.

There are some who would look at Montana and see two classes of landscapes: the publicly-owned parks and wilderness preserves, and the

privately-owned working terrains of farms, ranches, and forests. Often, these people believe that the former is more deserving of our conservation attention and resources.

But we have always known that the protection and conservation of our working landscapes is as important as the protection of our public lands. The success of landscape-level conservation lies in the critical intersection of public and private land.

**HELPING RANCHING AND FARMING FAMILIES** stay on the land while protecting river valleys, watersheds, wildlife corridors, winter range, and breeding habitat for wildlife exponentially increases the value of public lands Montanans love so much. The two go hand-in-hand.

The distinct challenge and reward of MLR's work is that each property, ranch, farm, parcel of land, and family is different and every owner has different goals for their property. I'm blown away every day by the staff at MLR who understand and respect the uniqueness of the places where they work and the people they work with.

Such practical respect is the true discipline of MLR's efforts.



In this year's annual report, you'll weave your way through the sage brush steppes and prairie plains of eastern Montana to the high mountains of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, from the banks of the iconic Smith River to the far corners of northwest Montana, through the ecological transition zones, through the public lands and working lands, and through the minds of the people who have chosen to protect their land for future generations.

The report is a story of the big picture and of the tiny puzzle pieces coming together. It is a story of collaboration and of deep affection for and affirmation of Montana's local communities, working landscapes, and the natural world.

It is a story of the past, of the present, and of the future.

It is a story of Montana.

—George Olsen

## SINCE 1978

The Montana Land Reliance has worked with private landowners all across Montana to meet their conservation goals, including the protection of major watersheds critical to agriculture and wildlife habitat.

## 1,038,964 ACRES

of ecologically, agriculturally, and historically important land, and 1,728 miles of streambank are now protected under MLR's 854 conservation easements.

Crop/Hay/Pasture  
172,876

Range/Forest  
866,088

Elk Habitat  
552,210

Wetlands  
42,362

Greater Yellowstone  
Ecosystem  
295,435

Northern Continental  
Divide Ecosystem  
19,915

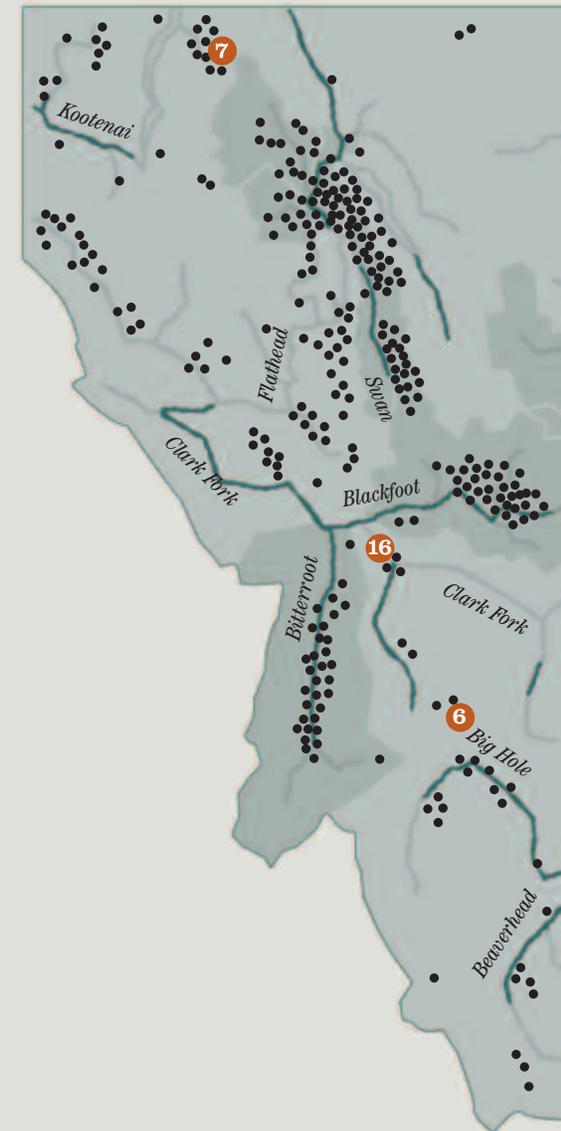
## 2017

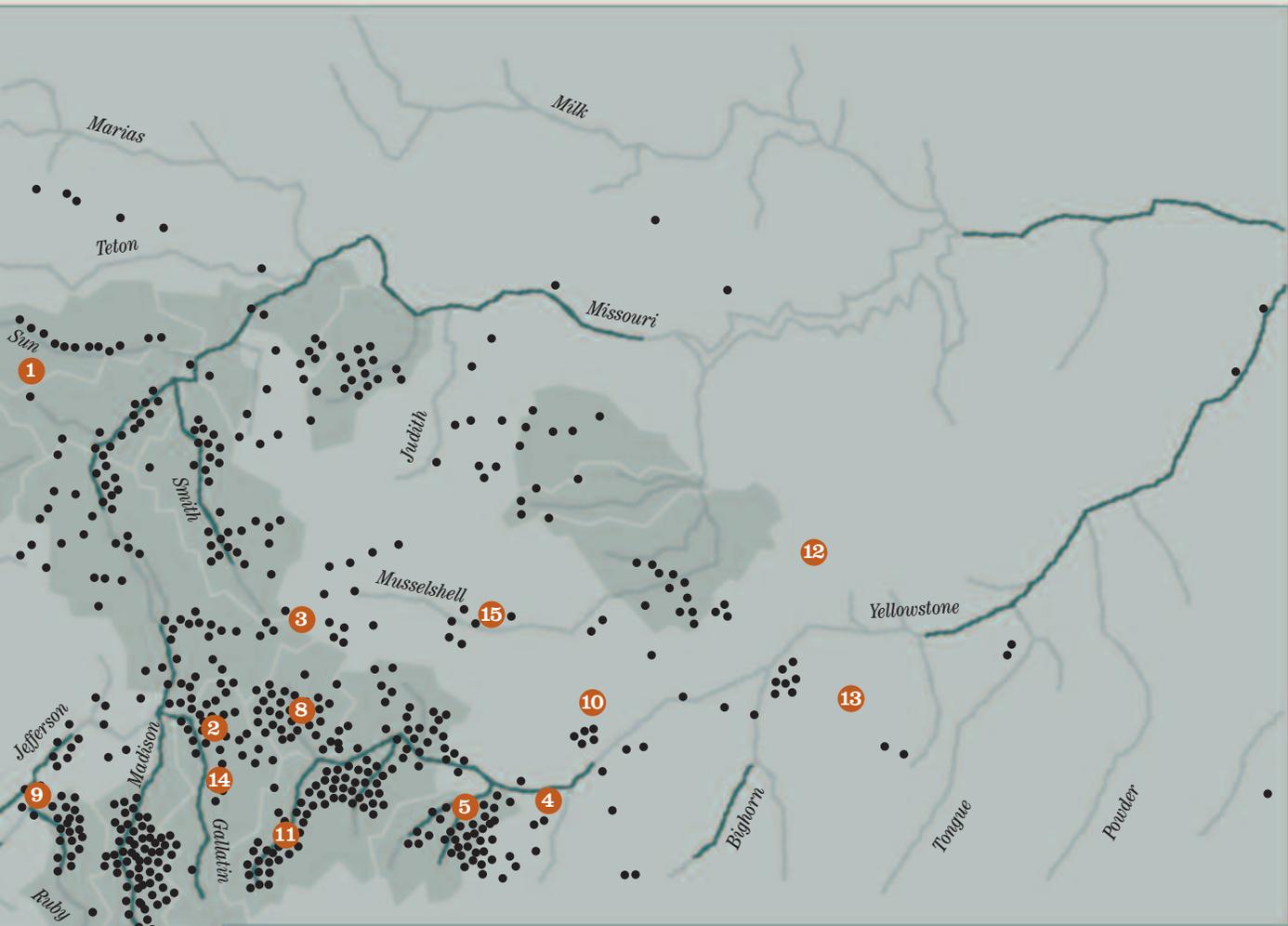
- 1 -	Shoco Ranch* - 836 acres
- 2 -	Mountain Hi Ranch** - 2,370 acres
- 3 -	Rostad Property - 4,615 acres
- 4 -	Arthun Property - 4,421 acres
- 5 -	Lien Property - 92 acres
- 6 -	Craig Property II - 74 acres
- 7 -	Brown Property - 62 acres
- 8 -	Schutz Property III - 628 acres
- 9 -	Hamilton Ranch - 1,454 acres
- 10 -	Bintz Property - 400 acres
- 11 -	X Bar T Ranch - 160 acres
- 12 -	Roberts L7 Ranch (North) - 24,622 acres
- 13 -	Roberts L7 Ranch (South) - 4,796 acres
- 14 -	Ritchey Property - 40 acres
- 15 -	Micks Ranches II - 3,093 acres
- 16 -	King Property - 567 acres

## 48,230 ACRES

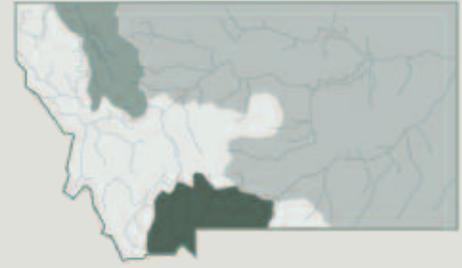
\*Partners: Lewis & Clark County Open Space Program, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Vital Ground, Montana Audubon Society

\*\*Partners: The Trust for Public Land, Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Lands Easement (ALE) Program

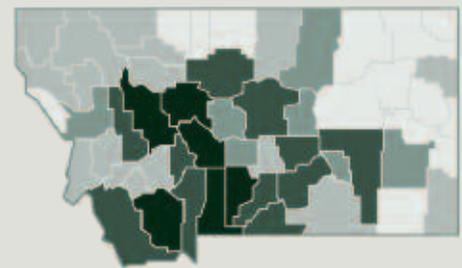




- MLR EASEMENT
- MAJOR WATERSHEDS
- BLUE- AND RED-RIBBON TROUT STREAMS



- ECOSYSTEMS
- Greater Yellowstone
  - Northern Continental Divide
  - Northern Great Plains



- EASEMENT DENSITY BY COUNTY
- 1–10,000 acres
  - 10,001–25,000 acres
  - 25,001–50,000 acres
  - More than 50,000 acres



## TAKING A WIDE VIEW

*“Like the sea there is something compelling about its distances and sweep. Nowhere except the sea is there quite the same subtlety of color, quite the same feeling of vastness.”*

– K. Ross Toole, *Uncommon Land*



OUT EAST

*This is a land where the sky comes down the same distance all around, and those who live in it love it – most of the time.*

– K. Ross Toole, *Uncommon Land*

**IT IS A LAND WHERE THE SKY** comes down the same distance all around. If you say those words to someone born and raised in eastern Montana they will nod knowingly. And, if you say the words Rosebud Creek, eastern Montanans will know you are talking about a creek that starts in the hills near Kirby, Montana, then winds and meanders quietly through colorful scoria hills past generational ranches with cows grazing in front of wind- and water-carved sandstone castles. Flowing north, the creek ends its journey when it joins with the Yellowstone River. Rosebud Creek is known to the Crow Indians as Bichkapaashe or “Rosehip River” for the wild roses that grow prolifically along its bank.

People from this area tell you that this is a land that gets in your blood; it is a place that changes you more than you change it.

It was in this country around 1887 that Jarrod Broadus’s great-grandfather, Henry Bailey, homesteaded and began putting a ranch together.

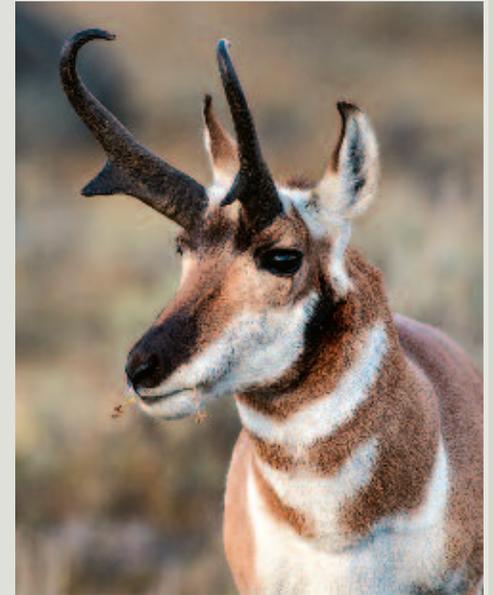
“It’s an amazing valley. And this particular part of this valley is even more so. It’s home,” said Jarrod.

It is a land of life, and its history is visible from the rock art left by Native Americans and some settlers on the sandstones. Pronghorn antelope graze the sagebrush throughout the year. Mule deer roam the hills alongside one of the most impressive elk herds in all of Montana; their trails wind up the steep side hills and into the rugged mountains.

Yes, there are mountains in eastern Montana.

Ungulates, raptors of all kinds, upland birds, amphibians, and reptiles live in this semi-arid landscape. Even though the conditions can be harsh, the land also supports many types of plant species, including yucca, skunk brush, sage, wild turnips, wild potatoes, and chokecherry bushes, all uniquely adapted to the dry conditions.

*continued...*



**Pronghorn antelope**



**IT'S ALSO GOOD RANCH COUNTRY.** Cow-calf operations are common in the area and so are longtime ranching families who can tell you their family's history in the area as quickly and easily as they can tell you what the weather was like the day before.

If you are on Rosebud Creek during the last light of the day, you'll notice it

travels quickly through the sandstones and the hills, illuminating the ancient geology of the land, setting fire to the epic sandstone formations. If you watch closely, you can hear the ancient conversations between the water, the wind, and the rock. And then, when earth turns just enough to send the last rays of light to western Montana, the stars reveal themselves.

Jarrold knows every sandstone on the place and can tell story after story about his family's history on the land. When Jarrold, his father Hugh, and mother Evelyn, decided to put the ranch into a conservation easement in 2010, and the second one in 2014, they had the history, and the future, of their family and land in mind.

"I do think that it is a family commitment. We understand the struggles that Henry Bailey went in to putting it together and the struggles the next generations put in to keeping the damn thing, making sure that it stays a working ranch and in the family. And now, I guess you are driven, you are damn sure that happens."

This big decision was one the family knew would help keep the ranch together and in the family.

"A conservation easement, for my family and I, was a no-brainer. And you want to keep it together to pass it down to the next generation. We can carry on our ranch. It's the way that we can keep this ranch ground as ranch ground, and keep it in the family for maybe another 100 years, who knows?"

**IN LATE JULY OF 1911,** Jarrod's grandmother, Margaret Bailey Broadus, only four years old at the time, got into a wagon with 16 others from her family and neighboring ranches, and left for Yellowstone National Park, which had been established in 1872.

Margaret writes about the trip in her memoir, *Through The Rosebuds*: "My folks packed up the old cow, tarpaulin tent, the camp stove, and mess box, about a month's worth of supplies, all the kids and a number of other young people who wanted to go, loaded up the wagons and off we went."

The roads were barely trails in those days, she recalled, and they spent a week making their way to the Park. They rode past Little Bighorn National Monument, where the remains of the Battle of the Little Bighorn were still

visible on the prairie. They continued through Billings, Livingston, Chico, and Gardiner.

She must have been struck by changes in the landscape, going from the grasslands and sagebrush steppe of the Montana prairie, following the mighty Yellowstone River, onto one of the highest, wildest, and most awesome alpine areas in all of North America. Ecological diversity could be considered a defining characteristic of Montana. But what didn't change was the wide-open spaces.

What Margaret didn't know at the time was that the place she came from and the place she was going on that trip would be cornerstones in the long-term effort by The Montana Land Reliance (MLR) to help protect Montana's heritage: open lands and working farms and ranches.

**AT THE END OF 2017**, MLR had protected one million acres. For almost four decades, MLR has focused on the protection of farms and ranches and working with people who want to keep the land productive and open.

If you look at a map of Montana and the places in which MLR has been able

to put conservation easements, what you'll see is that they have protected lands of consequence, places that, if developed, would be irreparably changed. Places that make Montana, *Montana*.

From the prairies and low mountains of Rosebud Creek Valley in eastern Montana, through the Greater

Yellowstone Ecosystem, to the Smith River Canyon country, to the timberland of northwest Montana, MLR considers entire landscapes and communities—buffering public land, protecting watersheds, and keeping farm and ranch land open and productive.



Alexis Bonogofsky

**Broadus Ranch  
near Lame Deer**



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## IN PARADISE

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*Appearing unannounced, the moon –  
Avoids a mountain’s jagged prongs –  
And sweeps into the open sky – Like  
one who knows where she belongs.*  
– “Nocturne” by W.H. Auden

**ON THE WAY** to Yellowstone National Park, as Margaret Bailey and her family traveled south in their wagons up the Paradise Valley, they passed a piece of land now owned by Ken Wilson, called the Eightmile Ranch. The land is considered part of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE), the wildest area in the Lower 48.

The region is one of the last remaining, large, nearly intact ecosystems, spanning over 34,375 square miles in the northern temperate zones, with Yellowstone National Park as its core. The ecosystem has every major species that existed before Europeans arrived: grizzly bear, wolves, bison, elk, pronghorn, deer, moose, a diversity of bird species, and other mammals, including wolverines, black-footed ferrets, Canada lynx, trumpeter swans, and sage grouse.

When Ken put the first pieces of his ranch in a conservation easement with MLR in 1990, he had an appreciation for the changes that the region would soon experience.

“As Montana continues to evolve and grow, there are and will be inevitable pressures for development. I think the importance of these conservation easements can’t be overstated,” said Ken.

Ken is right. Population growth in and around the GYE is presenting great challenges to maintaining working farms and ranches, and wildlife habitat. According to a recent article published in *National Geographic Magazine*, private land tracts with no or few homes is declining in the region. The number of tracts with one home per 40 acres increased by 328 percent from 1970 to 2010. The article also cited a 2013 study that found 30 percent of the GYE to be “developed,” and some wildlife migration pathways believed to be imperiled. The article predicted that, by 2020, between five and 40 percent of the ecosystem’s most biologically rich habitats will undergo conversion from ranch and farmland to exurban development.

**THE NEARBY GALLATIN VALLEY** is one of the fastest growing semi-rural areas in America. There is no denying that growth is heavily impacting some of the richest farmland and key wildlife habitat for species synonymous with the ecosystem.

MLR saw the writing on the wall decades ago and began working to protect thousands of acres of land in this critical ecosystem. In the Gallatin Valley, 31,501 acres have been put into conservation easements and in the Paradise Valley, 21,684 acres are protected.

“I think if you look up and down the Paradise Valley, the Land Reliance has done, probably more than anyone else, an amazing job of preserving the area, the riparian areas, and the migrations of mammals. It’s such an important legacy,” said Ken.

Ken has also completed a number of projects to enhance the habitat values of the property with prudent range management and restoration of Eightmile Creek, an important riparian habitat for many bird species. It runs through the property, eventually flowing in to the Yellowstone River. The pronghorn are back for the spring, a large herd of elk winters there, and one or two packs of wolves use the property at any given time.

Protecting private land from development near and next to public land increases space for wildlife to roam. Private land is critical to maintaining the health of the GYE.



**Protecting private land increases space for wildlife to roam.**

**WHAT MAKES THE GYE UNIQUE** is that large ungulate herds still use ancient migration pathways to move across the landscape between seasonal summer habitats in the mountains and their winter ranges. The routes used by elk, mule deer, and pronghorn are among the longest in North America. Migration routes have vanished almost everywhere else due to habitat fragmentation caused by human activities.

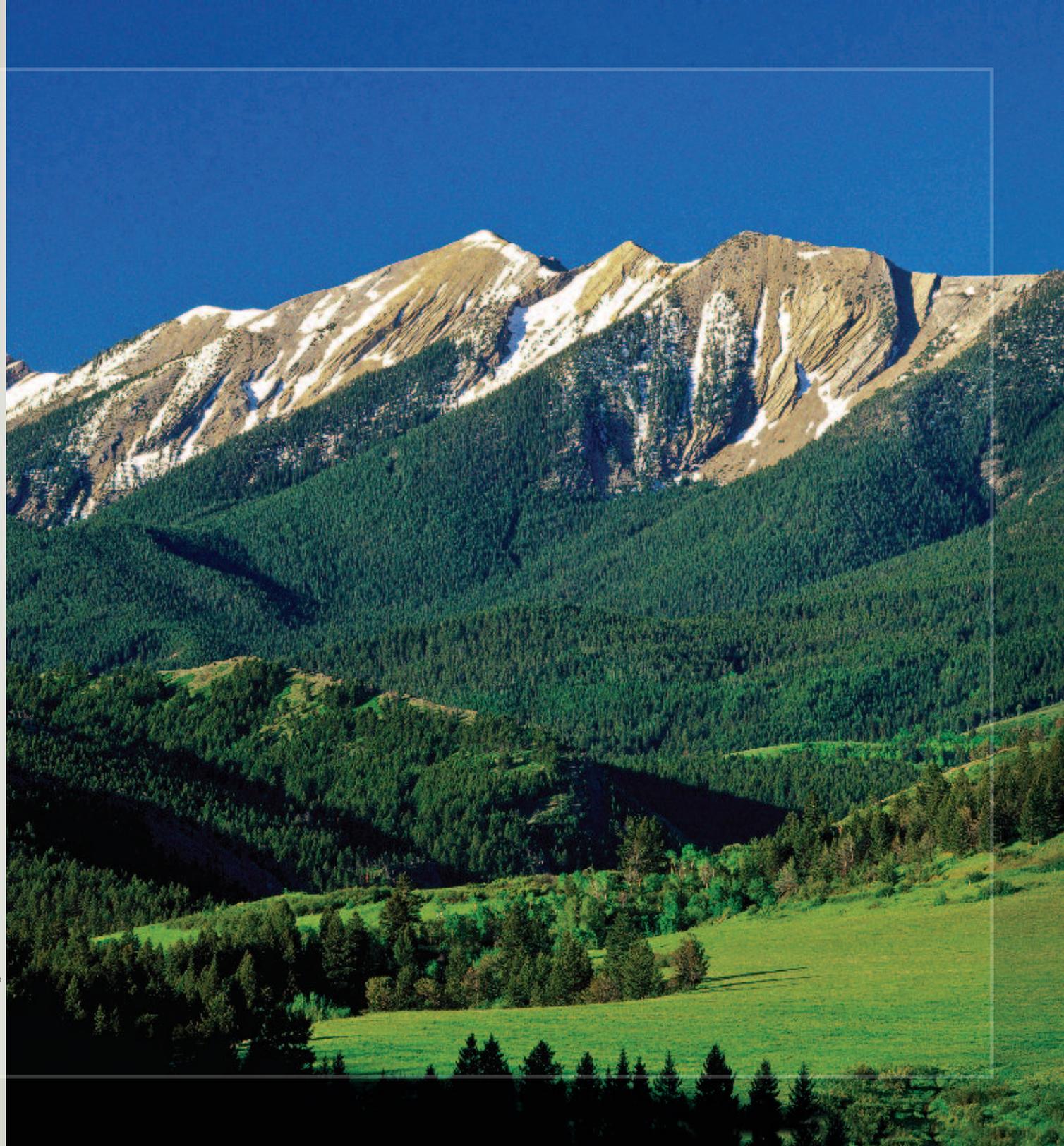
“Largely due to the Land Reliance, there are protected wildlife corridors throughout the Gallatin Range where there is an amazing amount of animal migration. Before civilization, they used to move freely and openly from where they spent the summer to where they spent the winter. Those migration patterns are still there. I’ve noticed it myself in terms of wildlife sightings, whether it is the elk or even the predators,” said Ken.

These migration routes can only remain viable in the future with the protection of private land and working farms and ranches. If private land is overtaken by housing developments and other human pressures, the wildlife migration corridors will be compromised irreparably.



**Shell Mountain near Livingston  
in the GYE**

*John Lambing*





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IN THE CANYON

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*If there is a western culture... I have not escaped it. It has to have shaped me. I may even have contributed to it in minor ways, for culture is a pyramid to which each of us brings a stone.*

– Wallace Stegner, *The American West as Living Space*

**ALMOST 100 MILES** directly north of the Paradise Valley, there is another unique ecosystem not found anywhere else in the Lower 48: the iconic Smith River, a 125-mile long stream whose headwaters are in the Little Belt and Castle mountains. It flows through a remarkable limestone canyon along the west side of the Little Belts and empties into the Missouri River, just downstream from the town of Ulm. The Smith River occupies another region of Montana where the threat of subdivision is high, like the Paradise Valley. On the Smith, almost 80 percent of the river is surrounded by private land, and without the efforts of MLR, the place would look a lot different from today.

Similar to the Rosebud Creek Valley, there is ancient art on the rock walls from as long ago as 3,000 B.C. –

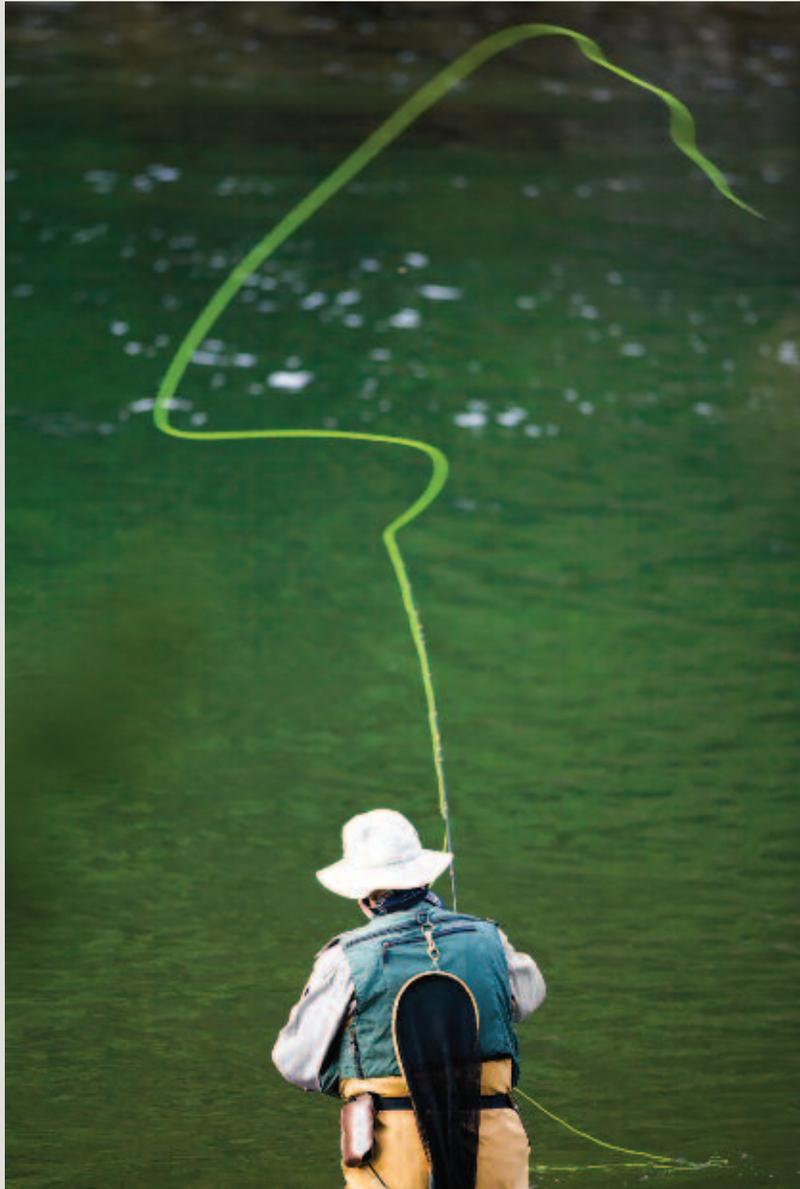
**The Smith River is a blue-ribbon trout fishery.**

paintings and drawings of clouds, handprints, and abstract designs. In this case, instead of carvings on sandstone, the art is on the Smith's steep limestone canyon walls and inside its large caves. The sheer volume of rock art surpasses that of any other Montana river – there are over 70 rock art sites along a 50-mile stretch of river.

The Smith River is steeped in history and fish. People from all over the country come to experience the blue-ribbon trout stream. The river carries brown trout, rainbow trout, brook trout, cutthroat trout, and burbot, among many other species. People who are lucky enough to secure one of the limited Smith River floating permits can also see black bear, elk, and deer. They see hawks and eagles soaring above them. Floating the Smith is one of the most sought-after recreational opportunities in the West.

That's how Ned and Linda Morgens, now landowners along the river, came to love the Smith River country.

"In the late 80s I made it out to the Smith River and floated down it. I was blown away by the spectacular beauty of the canyon. Just blown away," Ned said. "I wanted to make sure I did my part to make sure it stays that way for the next 100 years."



After some negotiations with a local rancher, Bob Gruel, Ned and Linda purchased their first tract of land with the promise to put a conservation easement on the property to ease Gruel's mind over the possibility of subdivision popping up on his ranch land. Two subdivisions had sprung up in the late 1960s, which alarmed both recreationists and ranchers who worried that the Smith would turn into an urbanized river corridor.

Ned believes the Smith River Canyon is one of the most unique river systems in the country. "Most of the land along the Smith is private land. And the amazing thing is that a lot of people have decided to put conservation easements on the land they have that surrounds the Smith. I'm not sure there is another stretch of river with that much private land and has that much protected land on its banks. Very few pieces of it are still vulnerable to development thanks to MLR."

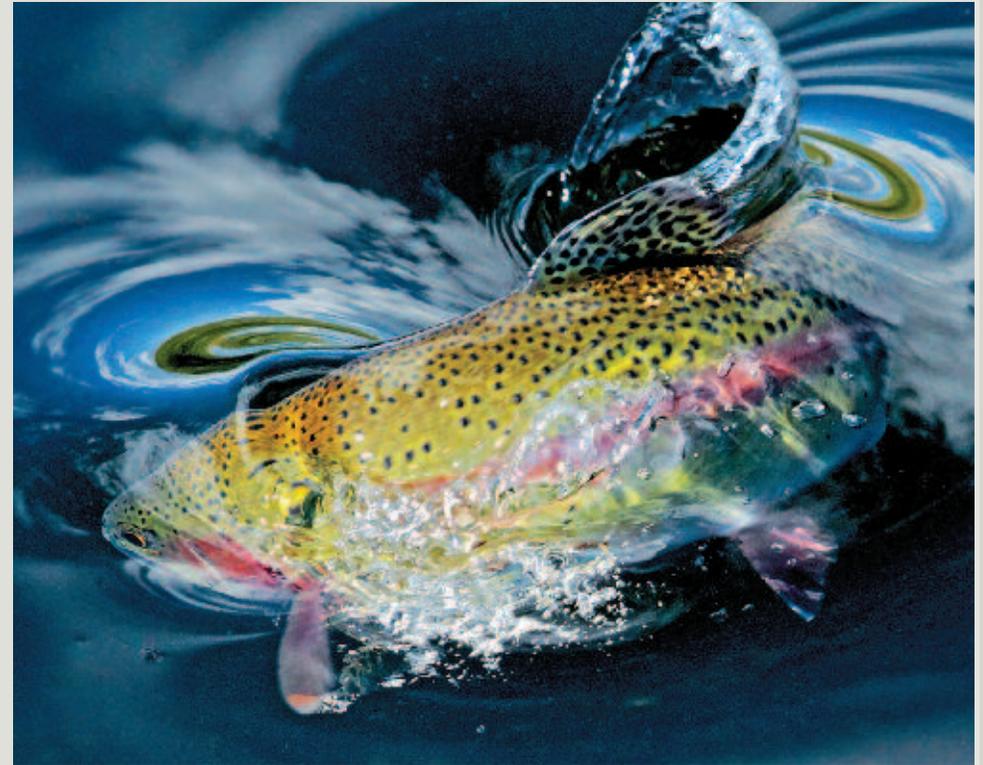
**MLR HAS 16 EASEMENTS** along the Smith, protecting over 32,000 acres and 69 miles of its banks. Ned believes his responsibility is to keep his land the way it is for future generations. He understands the intimate connections between private land and the public land, and the need to protect both.

"Private land protection is critical. At the present, we seem to be dismantling some of our protected lands and we need to make sure that these spaces stay open and working." Ned continues, "I think, what can we do as private citizens? We can put conservation easements on our property. We can make sure that our kids and grandkids can still enjoy it without covering it with plastic houses. We need these easements as tools to save the Last Best Place."

Just across the river from the Morgens' property is Rod and Julie Pribyl's ranch, which they put into a conservation easement in 2009. Rod Pribyl's grandfather homesteaded the ranch in 1889. The Pribyl's are what Wallace Stegner would call "stickers."

"Boomers," he said, "are those who pillage and run, who want to make a killing and end up on Easy Street," whereas stickers are "those who settle, and love the life they have made and the place they have made it in."

"We have a rich history here," said Rod. "My dad was always very proud. We instilled that in our children. That is one of the reasons we got interested in conservation easements. One of the things we really wanted to do was to



kentonrowphotography.com

preserve the ranch and have it be a ranch instead of be developed piecemeal and sold off."

Rod, Julie, and their three daughters have been deeply shaped by their connection to the land. Julie speaks of Charlie Russell sunsets, her commitment to keeping the ranch in the family, and her affection for the land in every word.

*continued...*

**The river carries brown trout, rainbow trout (pictured), brook trout, cutthroat trout, and burbot, among many other species.**





*Jfshegnyphotography.com*

Wendell Berry, the farmer, poet, and philosopher, argued that “stickers” as Stegner called them, “are motivated by affection, by such love for a place and its life that they want to preserve it and remain in it.”

Rod said, “You know, we are in the foothills of the Little Belts. When you drop over the top of what we call ‘the Baldy,’ you look over that beautiful, beautiful, Smith River Canyon country, with all the trees and the river, and the canyon walls. And then when you look north, it’s all prairie. My father-in-law always said you could see the Sweet Grass Hills if you knew what you were looking for. It is having the best of both worlds.”

**IN A WORLD WHERE** many are looking for the next place to develop, sell off, and get rich, Rod and Julie envision a future where the Smith River remains how it has always been.

“For me, I look at this ranch or any piece of land as something that we have a commitment to care for, for the period of time we are here and working it. Ownership passes. I feel a real commitment to taking care of what

we have and keeping this land in agriculture instead of [it] being developed. We want to leave it as good or better than we got it,” said Julie.

The Pribyls’ ranch, just like the Morgens’ ranch across the river and the Wilsons’ ranch in the Paradise Valley, are adjacent to large tracts of public land, providing a buffer zone and more open country for Montana’s wildlife. Rod and Julie are also enrolled in the Block Management Program through Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. They believe strongly in community and giving back, allowing others to experience the gifts they have been given.

“It’s important to me that these areas stay open and that the public has a chance to be there. Even if they don’t get anything hunting, but even just to go up there and look out over the Smith, it’s a blessing,” said Rod.

The Morgens and the Pribyls recognize the value in keeping the Smith River country open and working. With the help of MLR, they can keep their land preserved, in perpetuity.



### **The iconic Smith River and its canyon**



SOUTH OF THE BORDER

*For humans to have a responsible relationship to the world, they must imagine their places in it. By imagination we recognize with sympathy the fellow members, human and nonhuman, with whom we share our place.*  
– Wendell Berry, *It All Turns on Affection*.

**FIVE HOURS WEST** of the Smith River Valley lies another iconic Montana ecosystem that is experiencing development pressures like the Paradise and Gallatin valleys. Kalispell, at the north end of the Flathead Valley, is the fastest growing city in Montana. Its proximity to some of Montana’s greatest outdoors, such as Glacier National Park, the Flathead Valley, and Whitefish, makes Kalispell an attractive place to live. Kalispell’s population

grew by 40 percent between the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Censuses. Flathead County is closing in on 100,000 residents, and at a quick pace.

John Chase has seen the changes in the community.

“It has changed really dramatically in the last 20 years, and I worry. There are lots of problems with the development of areas that are forested and in the urban-wildland interface. They should be left alone.”

John has the original homesteading papers issued for his mountain property that overlooks the Flathead Valley near Kalispell. His grandparents purchased the land from a man named John Lawson in 1910 for \$550, four years after Lawson filed the paperwork.

Chase’s grandparents and his mom, who was only one-and-a-half years old at the time, came to America from Germany. They ended up in northwest Montana. John recalls the pride his grandfather had in owning the 160 acres of timberland.

**Mission Valley  
near Ronan**





**Cow moose**

“If you were an average person in Germany, you didn’t own forest land. He was extraordinarily proud of owning this property in America.” John continued, “My mom and her siblings would hike up to it out of Kalispell and spend time there. It was my grandfather’s pride and joy.”

John, just like the other private landowners who have worked with MLR to establish conservation easements on their properties, has a deep commitment to place. He feels a responsibility to leave something behind that people and wildlife can enjoy in the future.

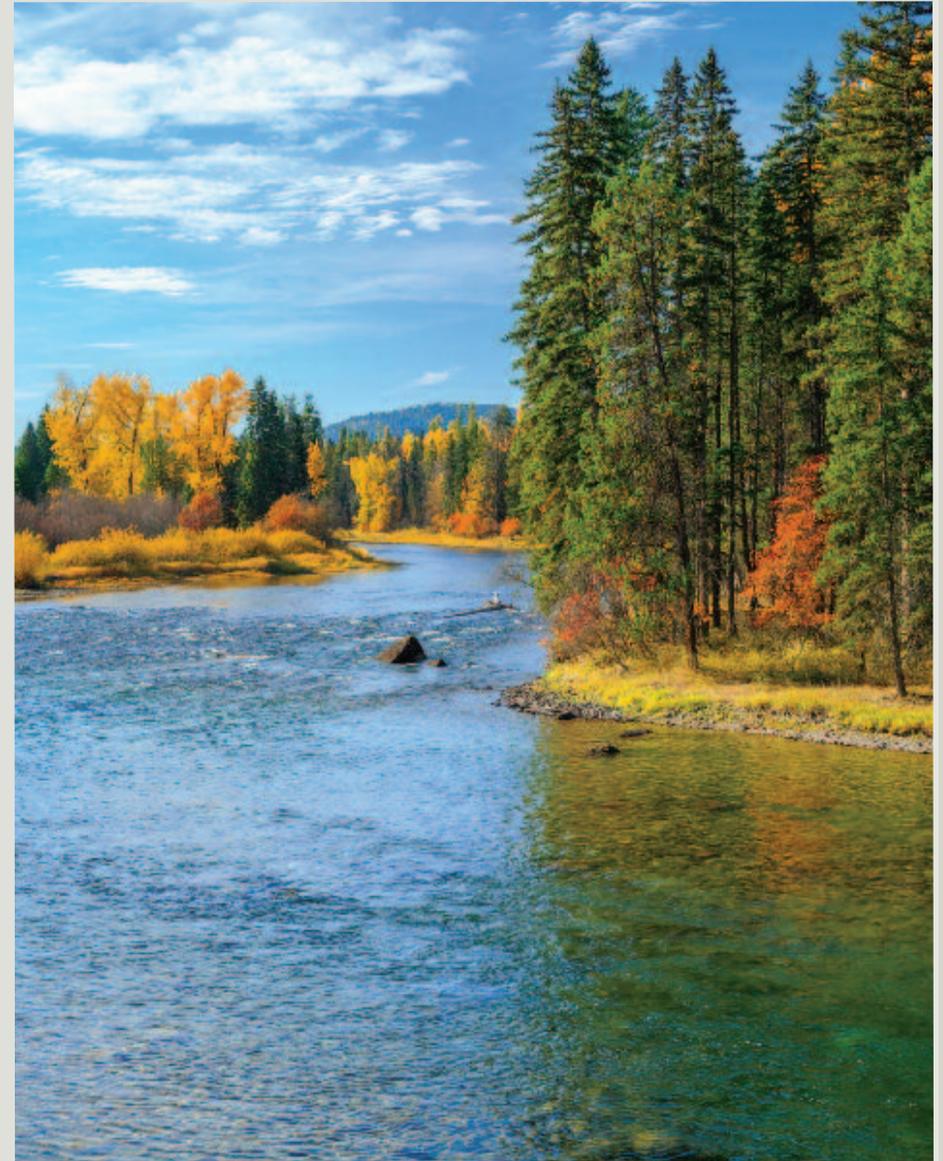
**JOHN SEES THE CONNECTIONS** between public land and the protection of private land. He understands that to protect one, you must protect the other. He allowed a public trail to

cross his property to connect with trail systems on public land and parks. He has a photo album of young people working to construct a path on National Trails Day, when they built over a mile of trail on his land.

“I certainly favor the use of conservation easements because once you start hacking up property, it is never going to be the same as it was. I can see the desirability of wanting to live in the woods, but the idea of all this development in areas you shouldn’t develop is just a darn poor idea.”

John serves on the Sun River Watershed Group Executive Committee, the Missouri River Conservation District Council, and is on the Montana Forest Stewardship Foundation Board of Directors. He sees firsthand the impacts of subdivisions and unchecked development.

“I want to leave something behind that is natural and that is getting more and more difficult these days. I want to try to leave things a little better than they have been. It’s been pretty badly damaged in some areas. I hope a lot more people consider conservation easements.”



**Swan River near Ferndale**

*John Lambing*



FOREVER MONTANA

*I'm in love with Montana. For other states I have admiration, respect, recognition, even some affection.*

*But with Montana it is love.*

*–John Steinbeck, Travels with Charley: In Search of America*

**Backroad in central Montana**

**Facing page: Sweetgrass Hills near Cleveland**

**IT IS NO ACCIDENT** that there are still open spaces and working farms and ranches in some of Montana's most iconic and unique landscapes. To protect Montana's heritage – open spaces for wildlife and people, working farms and ranches, and

strong rural communities – MLR takes a wide view, looks at the entire landscape, and then diligently and proactively works with landowners to meet their goals for their land and to protect those spaces.

The work of MLR is not abstract. It deals with real people in real places. Each person may have different reasons and motivations for pursuing a conservation easement, but what binds them all together is a deep appreciation for their land.

They understand their connection with necessary things: the dirt and the air, the past and the future, strong families and strong communities; the complex community of animals, plants, and people in between.

Rock Ringling, longtime MLR Managing Director, has been able to see the connections be built and strengthened over time.

“Our goal has always been to be a partner for Montana's working farmers and ranchers, and private landowners to achieve their conservation goals,” said Rock, “We've always had the long game in mind, and it has paid off. Our success has greatly exceeded what we ever could have imagined, and we are humbled by our partners' faith in the organization.”



Lynn Donaldson

Todd Klassy





2017 CONSERVATION AWARD  
DAVID ARTHUN

*"I'm a steward.  
I want to leave  
this place better  
than I found it."*

—David Arthun

**DAVID ARTHUN MET ME** in Joliet and I followed him a short distance to his ranch, where my border collie, Lena, and I hopped into the ranch pickup. Winter storms kept delaying our interview, but on this cold January morning, the sun was bright, almost blinding, as it reflected off the new snow. Wispy clouds formed and dissipated in a bright blue Montana sky. David wore a stocking cap and sunglasses and had a laugh that came easy and often. He took me to one of the highest accessible points on the ranch.



Alexis Bonogofsky

"See over there," David pointed off to the east, "there's a nice view of the Pryors." Then he pointed to the north, "you can see the Snowies on a clear day and Crazies," then he nods to the south, "and of course the Beartooths."

We pulled off onto a little overlook and stepped out of the truck. The wind was blowing something fierce and we could barely hear each other.

"So, I was sitting up here on Harris Hill. Frank Harris was the original homesteader, you see." David continued, "so I was sitting here on the 31st of July and watching the sunset and all the mountain ranges, the Crazies and the Absarokas, the Pryors, were just lit up."

He looked around. "I just can't believe how beautiful it is. And then I turned around to get in the truck and right over Silesia was the biggest moon I've ever seen in my life and I thought, 'Boy, this isn't a bad place.'"

You can tell when people love their land. And it is not hard to understand why David's grandparents settled in the foothills of the Beartooth Mountains. They were both from

**David Arthun's ranch provides good habitat for upland birds like the ring-neck pheasant (right).**

Norway but didn't meet until they made it to Montana.

His grandfather worked for a sheep outfit in Red Lodge and after buying out the owners, he homesteaded near Joliet in 1913.

As we bumped around in the truck, David pointed to different landscape features on his place and his neighbors' places, each with their own name and history: Young's Point, a famous landmark for fur trappers; Oscar's Canyon, named after Oscar Bergamon; White Horse Bench, "where the antelope are." He laughs, showing me where he recently got stuck in the snow trying to access his only well to do repairs.

David has a deep familiarity of the land and the local landscape. As he drove me around the ranch, bald eagles soared above the rocky outcrops. He told me about the time that he saw a huge black bear disappear into the tall sagebrush. "One minute it was there, and then, gone. I have no idea where he went."

On the other side of the road, he pointed to an area where the bobcats like to hang out. As we passed over a creek where he used to swim as a child, he began to tell me the reasons he decided to put the 4,421-acre ranch into a conservation easement.

“You know, I want a lot of people to be able to enjoy this land. It was always that way. My folks would have never subdivided this place.”

David pointed in the direction of a fairly new subdivision that was built near his ranch. “If you break up the land, you break up the wildlife corridors, their winter range, the migratory routes, everything. If you break up the corridors for the wildlife, your footprint is much greater than the 20 or 30 acres, your influence on wildlife and habitat extends way beyond that and it’s all negative.”

David wanted the peace of mind of knowing that once he was gone, the land would stay the way his family wanted it to be: unbroken, open, and working. I asked him about how he found MLR. He said it was probably through working with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP). He turned to me, “MLR does really good work, don’t they?”

### **A FAMILY HISTORY OF GIVING BACK**

David’s family’s philosophy has always involved allowing the public to enjoy their land, specifically through Montana’s Block Management Program, which is a cooperative program between private landowners

and FWP. Block management helps landowners manage hunting activities and provides the public with free hunting access to private land, and sometimes to adjacent or isolated public lands. David’s father enrolled in the program and David continues the tradition today.

Dan Vermillion, an MLR Board member and also a FWP Commissioner, nominated David for the 2017 MLR Conservation Award, saying, “the Arthuns have been a shining light in the Block Management Program. Dave is a landowner who is invested in community and people. As a hunter, and a Fish and Wildlife Commissioner, it is heartening to know that The Montana Land Reliance is there to work with a family operation to accomplish long-term protection for the private land.”

When talking about the hunters able to access his land, David’s voice is filled with pride for what his family has been able to offer. He pointed to the ridgeline on his place where upland bird hunters like to go. “Lots of people get to enjoy the land. That’s a positive thing. We’ve got lots of mule deer, some white tail, some antelope, and lots of birds. If this was ever developed, only a few would get to enjoy it instead of the many. It’s a good program. FWP gets to manage

the game a bit better and I get paid a bit too, which is nice.”

### **STEWARD OF THE LAND**

David also started using cover crops to help build organic material in his soil and restore some cropland that was being overrun by weeds.

“I met a farmer from North Dakota who started doing this no-till cover crop stuff 20 years ago. He told me one time they got 13 inches of rain in two days. He said he went out and some of his neighbors had standing water for two weeks and some fields were washed out. He went out in his fields two days later and he could walk across them because he had so much organic material, none of the water had run off. The land took it all in. That’s what I’m going for here.”

We drove by the fields David has planted with cover crops. This conversation lasted awhile since my family is doing the same on our farm. We trade stories and he invited me back out in the spring to take photos and check out how his cover crop is doing. He showed me where the apiarist, or, as David called him, the bee man from Columbus, keeps his bee boxes. Those bees help pollinate his cover crops.



“Dad always said that we don’t own that land. We are just stewards, so that’s what I am, I’m a steward. I want to leave this place better than I found it, and my dad left it in pretty darn good shape.”

I asked David how he felt when the staff at MLR told him he’d won the 2017 Conservation Award. Hand on the wheel, slowly driving back to my car on the gravel road, he looked out the window over the area where he saw the black bear disappear and at the ridgeline where the bobcats hang out. He said, “Kinda surprised. Yeah, I was surprised.” After a long pause he continued, “God tends the earth every day and it’s best for us to try to minimize our interference. There will be lots and lots of people. Long after I’m gone, others will be able to enjoy it. It’s the least I could do.”





2017 WILLIAM F. LONG CONSERVATION AWARD  
CAROL & DON ROBERTS



Alexis Bonogofsky

*“To do a conservation easement, for me, is helping to ensure that there is still this open land for the animals for their habitat.”*

—Don Roberts

“Golden eagles, bald eagles, ferruginous hawks, Swainson’s hawk, peregrine falcon, sharp tail grouse, owls of all kinds, blue herons, greater sage grouse, western tanager, blue birds, wood peckers...”

This list was just a small snippet of the answer Don Roberts gave me when I asked him about the different bird species that he and his wife Carol see on their two eastern Montana ranches, one south of Hysham and the other near Ingomar. After he finishes a seemingly endless list of birds I ask him, “What is your favorite bird?” He didn’t hesitate. “Well, I guess my favorite bird, well I admire the prairie falcons and their abilities. And the western tanager is amazing, and the blue bird and its feathers. Did you know that the blue color comes from the structure of its feathers?”

The western tanager came up many times in our conversation so I looked it up after the interview. And yes, it is a striking bird. People described looking at the male as if one were looking at a flame: a bright orange-red head, a brilliant yellow body, and coal black wings, back, and tail.

The different species of eastern Montana birds is a topic close to the Roberts’ hearts: their beauty, their

behavior, and what they need to thrive. “The birds accept you much more readily when you are on horseback. You can be on the sandstone cliffs and these birds will coast by, totally ignoring you. You can hear the wind moving over and under their feathers. It’s fascinating.”

Don and Carol Roberts’ two Montana ranches provide over 29,418 acres of spectacular bird habitat in eastern Montana. They made the decision to put the properties in a conservation easement with The Montana Land Reliance (MLR) to protect those wide-open spaces that birds and all the other prairie wildlife need to survive.

That commitment to place and the protection of crucial bird habitat is why the Roberts are the 2017 recipients of The Montana Land Reliance’s William F. Long Conservation Award; an award given to landowners who have worked to permanently protect significant bird habitat.

Carol and Don told me about the land: the creeks and coulees; the huge sandstone rock formations; the natural springs; and the brilliant green of the prairie in the spring. And the frogs, they said, you wouldn’t believe how many frogs come out when the weather starts to warm up. They talked of the

blue heron rookery on the north place and how those herons find ample sustenance in the large frog population. They also have swift fox on their ranch, an animal that almost went extinct before biologists found some success in reintroducing the species in the northern Great Plains.

“We saw a swift fox at the south ranch. I had to do a double take. That face is so different and they are so small. At one time they were very common. It’s nice to see them coming back.”

Don and Carol’s goals are clear and forward-thinking. They want to maintain the natural prairie, to run a successful, sustainable, and natural cow-calf operation, and to protect the land. They saw a conservation easement as a tool to help them do just that.

#### A LIFETIME OF GIVING BACK

Carol, originally from Cincinnati, Ohio, laughed recalling her first impression of the wide-open prairies of eastern Montana. “I grew up with cardinals, blue jays, chickadees, and I always loved that, having nature around me. When I moved out here with Don, there were very few trees. I was,” she turns to her husband and smiles, “distracted.”

Don grew up in Billings so he was used to big open areas, which he cherishes on their ranches. “It gets in your blood,” he said. Don, now retired, was an oral surgeon in Billings for over 40 years and Carol managed his office while raising three daughters, now grown. They purchased the ranches in the early 2000s.

The couple values the long rides they take together on horseback. “It’s no surprise,” says Carol. “I like to be down in the coulees and have the rocks and feel the rocks and trees around me. Don prefers to be out on top of the property’s high points, looking out. Right after we bought the places, Don and I were down there for a weekend and we were exploring and went on top of a hill and looked out and I had this sense that really people shouldn’t own this land. That we should be stewards of it. To do a conservation easement, for me, is helping to ensure that there is still this open land for the animals for their habitat.”

Don, who served in the Montana Legislature and is actively involved in Montana Audubon was instrumental in the creation of the Audubon Center on the south side of Billings. He has a wide and long view of the future of land conservation in Montana and what needs to be done to protect our heritage.

“We are in a situation where if these particular chunks of land that we own are not protected, a lot of other things would fall by the wayside in the area because these are central pieces. They are lands with unique characteristics and irreplaceable resources.”

As an example, he pointed to the golden eagle.

“They need these areas where they can be expansive. You just have to look at their flight patterns. Those birds need space, they need a support system. We were able to protect that for them and we’re proud of that.”

Both Carol and Don have spent a lifetime giving back to the community. In 2017, Carol was named one of the *Billings Gazette’s* 20 Exceptional Women. She works with La Leche League, an international group that advocates for and educates people about the benefits of breastfeeding. She was the co-leader of the fund drive for Family Promise and helped raise more than \$600,000 for their new building on Billings’ south side.

When I ask Don and Carol about what they hope they are leaving for Montana and future generations they are quiet for a moment.



**Western Tanager**

“You know,” Don says, “Montana still can be a place for people and wildlife and big open spaces. We still have that chance to protect what makes this state great and our heritage. We are leaving spaces so that our wildlife can roam, can adapt, and thrive. We’ve tried to be farsighted about trying to preserve the natural environment. Once you change it, it is very hard to go back.”

Carol agreed, “The land that we have is very central to preserving the wildlife in that area. All aspects of it. And I’ve always admired the people who had the generosity and foresight to protect places like Central Park in New York City, our National Parks, our public lands.”



## FOREVER MONTANA SOCIETY

**The Forever Montana Society exists to honor those who have left a lasting legacy of conservation, and to inspire others to do the same.**

With perpetuity in mind, the Forever Montana Society is open to all consenting MLR easement donors and to those who have provided for MLR's mission in their overall financial and estate plans, sustaining agricultural lands, fish and wildlife habitat, and open space for generations to come.

This year, we give thanks to our first Forever Montana Society inductees. This list recognizes those who have agreed to be listed as Forever Montana Society members. Joining the Forever Montana Society is as easy as contacting MLR's staff to inform us of your intentions.

MLR will always respect your wishes should you want to remain anonymous, but encourages you to contact MLR to inform us of your plans. MLR wants to thank you personally, offer our confidential assistance should you have any questions about gift and estate planning, and ensure your wishes are properly documented and understood.

If you would like to be recognized as a member, or would be interested in learning more about planned giving, please call the Helena office, or complete the form located on MLR's website ([mtlandreliance.org](http://mtlandreliance.org)).

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 Norton, Douglas L. & Linda C.  
 Norton, Marshall L.  
 Nutt, William J. & Deborah S.  
 O'Connor, Roy & Susan  
 O'Steen, John & Judi  
 Offenkranz, Fred  
 Ogden, Jr., William F. & Elinor K.  
 Ohman, Christopher C.  
 & Tamara J. Uecker  
 Olsen, George S. & Ellen Vogelsang  
 Opitz, Josh & Elizabeth  
 Oresman, Stephen B.  
 Ossorio, Jr., Frederic E. & Stacy M.  
 Owen, David L. & Kathryn J.  
 Packard, Julie  
 Paine, Jr., Peter S.  
 Paoli, David R. & Monica Conrad  
 Parker, Michael L. & Ann  
 Parks, Stephen E. & Judith D.  
 Patrican, Brian  
 Patterson, Thomas A. & Kristi  
 Patterson, William R. & Donna  
 Paul, Ronald N.  
 Paulek, Mark & Jeanne Hamilton  
 Peabody, Robert L. & Laura S.
- Peck, Charles  
 & Yuryra Guzman Robles  
 Perkins, David D.  
 & Nancy MacKinnon  
 Peterson, Gerald R.  
 Pfeiffer, Steven B.  
 & Kristin Reagan Pfeiffer  
 Phelps, Chris & Peggy Hollow-Phelps  
 Phillips, Leland H. & Sheila M.  
 Phillips, Mary E. & Kathleen Tracy  
 Phinney, Ben & Barbara  
 Pierce, Marc & Sherrie  
 Pierrepont, Jay & Lisa  
 Ploder, Steven E. & Lisa A.  
 Plummer, Jeremy  
 Poett, III, Henry W. & Cynthia S.  
 Povich, Maurice R. & Connie Chung  
 Proops, Jay D. & Mary K.  
 Quinn, Jane & Bill  
 Raible, Joe & Barbara  
 Rasker, Jodi & Raymond  
 Rasmussen, Judy A.  
 Rasmussen, Robert S.  
 Rauner, Bruce V. & Diana Mendley  
 Reed, Glenn W. & Barbara W.  
 Reed, Keith & Lisa  
 Reed, Thomas  
 Rehmman, Wilbur W.  
 Reynolds, Kathleen  
 & Bill Schranberg  
 Reynolds, Michael & Sara Stalaker  
 Retzler, Christopher J. & Karen H.  
 Richards, S. F. & Bruce William  
 Ringling, Rick  
 Roark, Carol Lee  
 Robbins, Gary L. & Cheryl J.  
 Roe, Sandra B.  
 Rogala, Elijah & Evie  
 Rogala, Kira  
 Rogers, Noyes  
 Rokita, Rusty B. & Deborah A.  
 Romatowski, Peter J.  
 & Suzanne Bonner  
 Roos, Kathie M. & Neal W. Blossom  
 Rosenthal, Edward S. & Nancy G.  
 Ross, Sarane H.  
 Rostad, Phil & Joan  
 Roth, Jane  
 Rotiacci, Edward  
 Royer, Amy & Fritz  
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 & Michael S. Clark  
 Ryan, William B. F.  
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 Sandve, Nikki

Santa, John L. & Carol M.  
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 Schmidt, Gregory M.  
 Schmidt, Joan  
 Schmidt, Jr., Dr. Chester W.  
 Scholz, Michael R. & Andrea  
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 & Dr. Genevieve Reid  
 Schutz, Jeffrey & Charlotte Caldwell  
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 Seeburg, Noel  
 Shearer, Cindy  
 Sheffler, Kathleen & Douglas  
 Shepardson Estate, Joan B.  
 Sherman, Kevin J.  
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 Smith, Randy  
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 Steiner, Ernest & Anna  
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 Stevenson, Carol S.  
 Strainer, Christopher A.  
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 Taylor, Paul A. & Lucienne J.  
 Walter C. & Janet D. Teagle, III  
 Family  
 Tempest, Jennifer Phelps  
 Thisted, Elizabeth G.  
 Thom, LeRoy & Jean  
 Thomas, Kris  
 Thomason, Rich & Sally  
 Tiller, Daniel A. & Mary A. Harper  
 Tilton, Tim

Tingle, Gene A. & Patricia F.  
 Tolliver, Judith A.  
 Torgrimson, Christine  
 Torrion, Jessica  
 Townsend, Jerry  
 Tubbs, John E.  
 & Stephanie Ambrose Tubbs  
 Tuck, Jared  
 Tureck, Anastasia M.  
 & Michael T. Menahan  
 Tureck, Judy & Hugo  
 Twedt, Margaret A.  
 Uecker, Jodi  
 Ulrich, Matthew  
 Van Dyk, Kendall & Christina  
 Van Dyke, J. Gary O. & Lynne L.  
 Vaughan, Lora  
 Vecino, Anthony P.  
 Vermillion, Dale & Margaret  
 Vermillion, Dan  
 Viers, David & Lorie  
 von Stade, Jr., Charles S.  
 & Eleanor  
 Vranish, MD, Loren S. & Sherry L.  
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 Ward, Jr., William F. & Deborah D.  
 Webb, Carl B. & Elizabeth  
 Wellenstein, Michael S. & Cori E.  
 Weyerhaeuser, Robert M.  
 Wheat, Michael E. & Debra L.  
 Wheeler, Col. James S. & Jane  
 Whitney, Jay & Sandra  
 Wiese, Jessica L.  
 Wiley, T. & K. A.  
 Wilkins, Thomas J. & Betty L.  
 Williams, Burton & Joan  
 Wilson, III, Kendrick R.  
 Wilson, Jr., David K. "Kim"  
 Wilson, Penelope P.  
 Wilson, Suzanne  
 Wimberly, J. David  
 Wise, Patricia  
 Woodson, Martha  
 Wortman, Kirk  
 Wright, Theodore M. & Elizabeth H.  
 Wrinkle, Guy Curtis & Cynthia  
 Yackel, John P. & Eleanor R.  
 Yordan, Jaime E.  
 Zackheim, Hugh & Karen  
 Zaideman, Robert & Julie  
 Zazofsky, Peter  
 Zovickian, Stephen & Janet  
 Zuckerberg, Lloyd  
 & Charlotte Triefus  
 Roy J. Zuckerberg Family  
 Zvyolowski, Linda M.

## FOUNDATIONS, COMPANIES, AND ORGANIZATIONS

1111 Foundation  
 AGL Foundation  
 Amazonsmile Foundation  
 American Public Land Exchange  
 Arrowhead Reclamation  
 B Bar Ranch  
 W. H. Bass, Inc.  
 Bibler Resource Company  
 Big Sky Events, LLC  
 Big Sky Resort  
 Big Sky Resort Area District  
 Birch Creek Ranch  
 Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation  
 BNSF Railway Foundation  
 Alexis Bonogofsky Photography  
 Bozeman Symphony  
 Vivian Bridaham - Big Sky Sotheby's  
 International Realty  
 Broadbent Family Foundation, Inc.  
 Broadus, Inc.  
 Cadeau Foundation  
 Camas Creek Cattle & Sheep Co.  
 CHS, Kalispell  
 The Cinnabar Foundation  
 Liz Claiborne & Arthur Ortenberg  
 Foundation  
 Clausen Law Group  
 Denolf Films, Inc.  
 Gary W. Dietrich Family Foundation  
 East Rosebud Fly and Tackle  
 Company  
 Eddy Foundation  
 El Western Cabins & Lodges  
 ERA Landmark Real Estate –  
 Robyn & Orville Erlenbush  
 Fanwood Foundation  
 First Cornerstone Foundation  
 Fladeboe Auctions  
 Forestration, Inc.  
 The Gabelli Foundation #2  
 Gallatin Canyon Women's Club  
 Gallatin River Guides –  
 Patrick & Brandy Straub  
 Glacier Grill & Pizzeria  
 Granger Ranches, LP  
 Gulch Distillers  
 Hall and Hall  
 The Horn Foundation  
 David & Janyce Hoyt Fund  
 Huppert, Swindlehurst  
 & Woodruff, PC  
 Hylton Family Charitable  
 Remainder Trust

Intermountain Opera  
 Robert Wood Johnson  
 1962 Charitable Trust  
 The Kirk Kellogg Foundation  
 Kelly Ranch  
 J. C. Kennedy Foundation, Inc.  
 Margot Kiser Charitable Fund  
 Knight Foundation, Inc.  
 L & K Real Estate  
 Land Trust Alliance  
 Lechner & Stauffer, Inc.  
 Lew Franck Family Fund  
 Lewis & Clark Expeditions, Inc.  
 Lewis & Clark Motels – Lisa Sebena  
 Lillie's Garden  
 Little-Kittinger Foundation  
 Lone Mountain Land Company  
 Lone Peak Brewery & Taphouse  
 Lovett-Woodsum Foundation, Inc.  
 Wendy Marquis Art  
 McGuire Family Foundation  
 McKell Land & Cattle –  
 Porter Bennett  
 Sandra McManus Jewelry  
 Mercer Diamond, LLC  
 Milestone Gallery of Belgrade  
 Montague's of Montana  
 Montana Association of  
 Land Trusts  
 Montana Chamber Music Society  
 Montana Community Foundation  
 Montana Fishing Outfitters, Inc.  
 Montana Planks  
 Montana State Employee  
 Charitable Giving  
 Moonlight Community Foundation  
 Morgan Stanley  
 Morrison, Sherwood, Wilson & Deola  
 Mountain Arts Pottery  
 The Muir String Quartet  
 The Nalen Foundation  
 National Fish and Wildlife  
 Foundation  
 North Country Garden Club  
 of LI, Inc.  
 NorthWestern Energy  
 Odegaard Braukmann Law, PLLC  
 John & Judy O'Steen Family  
 Foundation  
 Outlaw Partners  
 Paoli Law Firm, PC  
 Patagonia.com  
 Charles Peck Art Glass  
 PGN Foundation  
 Pisk Chiropractic  
 & Physiotherapy, PC

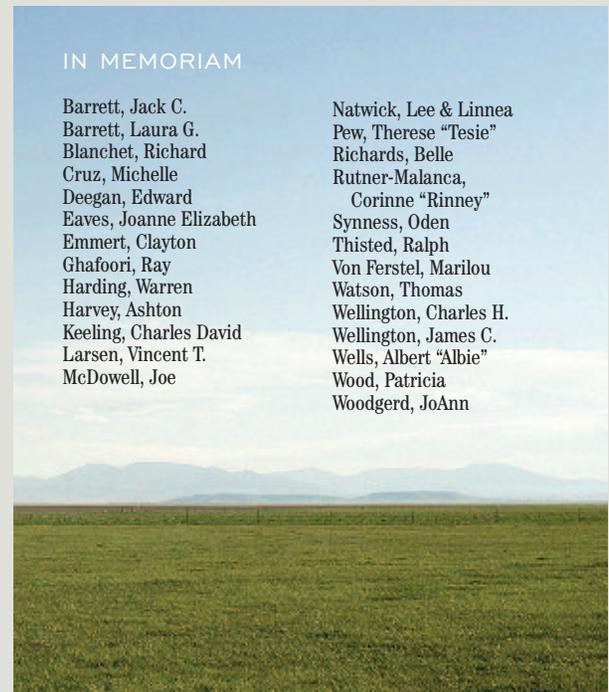
Pleiades Foundation  
 PMD Ranch  
 The Pocket Foundation  
 Point of Rocks Ranch, LLC  
 Premier Intermountain Properties  
 Quilting in the Country  
 Rahr Foundation  
 Rainbow River Ranch  
 Ranch Resources  
 RDO Equipment Co.  
 Real World Design  
 Riversage Development, Inc.  
 Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation  
 Roling Family Fund at the  
 Flathead Community Foundation  
 Rory's Rustic Furniture  
 Rostad & Rostad, Inc.  
 Ruby Habitat Foundation  
 Sauce Food Truck  
 The Schlinger Family Foundation  
 Shovel & Spoon  
 Sieben Live Stock Company  
 Star Peak Foundation  
 C. Stone Foundation  
 Stony Point Foundation  
 Storey Hereford Ranch  
 Swan Mountain Outfitters

Sweetwater Travel Company  
 Tapeats Fund  
 Terra Western Associates  
 John & Carry Thacher Family Fund  
 Tordik Wildlife Foundation  
 The Treacy Foundation  
 Trust for Public Land  
 Two Fishies, LLC  
 Under Canvas  
 USDA – Natural Resources  
 Conservation Service  
 The Vital Ground Foundation  
 Matthew A. & Susan B. Weatherbie  
 Foundation  
 Wellington Shields & Co., LLC  
 Henry E. & Consuelo S. Wenger  
 Foundation, Inc.  
 The Wildwood Foundation  
 Williams Law Group, LLC  
 Willie's Distillery, Inc.  
 Willinphila Foundation  
 The Wine Gallery  
 Woodson Ranch  
 Yellowstone Club  
 Yellowstone Club  
 Community Foundation  
 Yellowstone Grassfed Beef

## IN MEMORIAM

Barrett, Jack C.  
 Barrett, Laura G.  
 Blanchet, Richard  
 Cruz, Michelle  
 Deegan, Edward  
 Eaves, Joanne Elizabeth  
 Emmert, Clayton  
 Ghafoori, Ray  
 Harding, Warren  
 Harvey, Ashton  
 Keeling, Charles David  
 Larsen, Vincent T.  
 McDowell, Joe

Natwick, Lee & Linnea  
 Pew, Therese "Tesie"  
 Richards, Belle  
 Rutner-Malanca,  
 Corinne "Rinney"  
 Synness, Oden  
 Thisted, Ralph  
 Von Ferstel, Marilou  
 Watson, Thomas  
 Wellington, Charles H.  
 Wellington, James C.  
 Wells, Albert "Albie"  
 Wood, Patricia  
 Woodgerd, JoAnn



Lynn Donaldson

## THE MONTANA LAND RELIANCE

### Thanks to the continued support of its generous donors, The Montana Land Reliance (MLR) had another banner year in 2017.

MLR's operations continue to be amazingly efficient, with expenditures for the year running nearly 15 percent under budget. Revenues for the year exceeded expenditures again this year—as they have for the past 33 years.

MLR was able to make grants to the Montana Land Reliance Foundation (Foundation) in the amount of \$119,669 in 2017. These grants allow for continued growth in the corpus of the Foundation's investment accounts.

Because MLR is a non-profit corporation, contributions made to MLR are tax-deductible. Planned gifts are one way to make a meaningful impact on MLR's mission, but there are many ways that families, individuals, foundations, corporations, and organizations can provide financial support for MLR's conservation work.

Stock gifts are welcome and MLR has a very good process in place through its investment team at Morgan Stanley to assist donors to ensure a smooth, well-documented transaction.

As you plan your charitable giving, MLR can assist you in helping determine the most suitable option for your financial needs. Call us at 406-443-7027 or visit [mtlandreliance.org](http://mtlandreliance.org) for more information.

Your gift goes directly to MLR's work with private landowners protecting Montana's open spaces and working landscapes.

#### How to Give

- Cash contributions
- Securities, land, vehicles, and other property

#### Gift & Estate Planning

- Bequests
- Gift annuities
- Charitable trusts
- Life estate gifts
- Life insurance policies
- Beneficiary designations
- Retirement assets

MLR's tax identification number is 81-0369262.

## MLR FOUNDATION

The Montana Land Reliance Foundation\* (the Foundation) capitalized on the positive investment environment in 2017 to expand its funds and continue to provide support to The Montana Land Reliance (MLR), and is pleased to see it reach its "million acres under easement" goal this year. The Foundation Board strives to manage its investments to ensure compliance with the investment policies and to enhance its financial strength. The Foundation works with Morgan Stanley to balance protecting funds for the future, earning income to support MLR's operations and growth.

During 2017, the Foundation granted \$281,975 to MLR from the Land Protection Fund to support stewardship and easement monitoring as well as funding for new easements. Additionally, the Foundation granted \$315,964 to MLR for education, outreach, and conservation,

and to help fund activities to enhance local support for private land conservation. Investment earnings in 2017 increased over 2016, averaging a 14 percent return on investments net of fees. The Foundation received \$119,669 from MLR and this, along with our investment value increases and earnings, grew our net assets from \$21.3 million to \$23.9 million after reflecting grants to MLR and other expenses.

The Foundation was pleased to welcome Karen Kress to the Board in 2017, as a new Board member. Karen, along with our continuing Board members – Doug Mitchell, Jerry Townsend, Phil Rostad, and I – are honored to serve and oversee the investments of the Foundation, providing funding for MLR's conservation efforts for many, many years to come.

*Kim Montag, President,  
Montana Land Reliance Foundation*

\*a 509(a)(3) support organization to The Montana Land Reliance

## 2017 FINANCIAL REPORT

**Land Protection Fund . . . . . \$ 13,550,068**  
*The corpus is available to defend and protect land already under easement; income is used for stewardship projects, monitoring of easements, and completing easements for donors who cannot cover these costs.*

**Education & Outreach Fund . . . . . \$ 8,024,537**  
*Income finances conservation education and outreach to landowners and the public.*

**Conservation Fund . . . . . \$ 2,309,638**  
*A permanent, irrevocable endowment designed to accept gifts from individuals or direct gifts from corporations, partnerships, or estates.*

**Traditions Fund . . . . . \$ 47,337**  
*A permanent, irrevocable endowment designed to accept planned gifts from individuals or direct gifts from corporations, partnerships, or estates.*

**Operating Fund . . . . . \$ 9,765**  
*Account used for day-to-day operations of the Foundation.*

**Total Assets . . . . . \$23,941,345**  
*as of 12-31-17*

## RUBY HABITAT FOUNDATION

**The Ruby Habitat Foundation\* is dedicated to preserving and enhancing the natural resources and social and economic makeup of the Ruby Valley and southwestern Montana.**

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### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Les Gilman, Executive Director

Group A,  
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George Olsen  
Lois Delger-DeMars  
Rock Ringling

Group B, Woodson Family  
Martha Woodson  
Leslie Vanderpool  
Robin Mitts  
Lisa Matthews

Group C, Ruby Valley  
Community  
Neil Barnosky  
Steve Wood  
Bruce Peterson

The Ruby Habitat Foundation's (RHF) mission statement begins by stating that we are dedicated to preserving and enhancing the natural resources, and social and economic makeup of the Ruby Valley and southwest Montana. This began with our founder, Craig Woodson's vision of benefiting this area by his generous and thoughtful plan to have a place to show and develop examples of good stewardship and conservation. An opportunity to show that good habitat and working ranches go hand in hand and the platform from which to tell that story to the interested public. It has been 15 years since Craig and his lovely bride, Martha, made this unselfish contribution and I feel we have all benefited greatly from their thoughtfulness.

For any organization to grow and thrive it has to have the right people or personalities to give guidance and vision and actually get the work done. We began with Craig leading the way for us and his decision to partner with The Montana Land Reliance has turned out to be a wise choice. Having two organizations that are dedicated to open space and good stewardship has been a recipe for inspiration and progress, but it is, once again, the people that make that difference and the personalities from MLR have been instrumental in this journey.

There are many people that have made a difference at RHF over the years and I would like to point out two that I feel illustrate the reason for the growth we have had and also a plan to keep working on our mission for the future. The first is our Executive Director, Les Gilman.

He had a close relationship with Craig long before RHF was formed and has continued to be a leader at RHF and in the community after Craig's passing. This is the guy that has a creative approach to each new project and challenge, the guy that gets things done, and keeps an order to the organization. We would not be where we are without Les and his talents.

Dave Delisi is the other individual I wish to point out. Dave came on board in 2015 as our Outreach Coordinator and at the time it seemed like a stretch to make this a full-time position. Hiring Dave has proven to be a very good decision. His passion for the Woodson Ranch, good stewardship, habitat, and wildlife is infectious to all that come in contact with him. He has increased the opportunity for education and broadened our outreach to the community and beyond.

Les and Dave are examples of doing the work of today while looking to the future, inspiring the next generation.

I have one more personality to look at. Each stream or river has its own personality, its own unique character if you will. Over the years Clear Creek has lost much of its character and gives an impression of sadness or being tired and worn out. As the restoration of Clear Creek begins and as it is brought back to good function, I am very anxious to see how it expresses its true character, its personality. This is an exciting project.

I truly want to thank all of you that support RHF in so many ways. Partnering with you makes all this possible.

*Neil Barnosky, Chairman,  
Ruby Habitat Foundation*

### 2017 FINANCIAL REPORT

Income . . . . .	\$ 235,101
Expenses . . . . .	\$ 176,934
<hr/>	
Rural Heritage & Open Lands Fund . . . . .	\$ 83,934
Hill Education & Outreach Endowment . . . . .	\$ 70,825
Woodson Ranch Endowment . . . . .	\$ 6,548,463
General Fund . . . . .	\$ 177,804
Fixed Assets	
Equipment and Improvements . . . . .	\$ 686,211
Land . . . . .	\$ 7,567,286
Visitor Center Building . . . . .	\$ 41,173
<hr/>	
<b>Total Assets . . . . .</b>	<b>\$15,175,696</b>

*as of 12-31-17*

\*a 509(a)(3) support organization to The Montana Land Reliance

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New York, NY

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Land Steward

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**Kim Cook**  
Administrative Assistant

**Lois Delger-DeMars**  
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**Christian Dietrich**  
General Counsel

**Jay Erickson**  
Managing Director

**Kathryn Kelly**  
Greater Yellowstone Manager

**Rock Ringling**  
Managing Director

**Mark Schiltz**  
Western Manager

**Becky Stearns**  
Bookkeeper

**Will Trimbath**  
Lands Manager

**Kendall Van Dyk**  
Eastern Manager

**Jessie Wiese**  
Southwest Manager

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**Janet Bean-Dochnahl**  
**Louise Bruce**  
**Don Carroll**  
**Andrea Darling**

**Pat Flanery**  
**Ron Hvizdak**  
**Jerry Iverson**  
**Marianne Klein**  
**Skip Kowalski**  
**Gayleen Malone**

**Jessica Miller**  
**John Moorhouse**  
**Jim Roscoe**  
**Erin Shanahan**  
**Tom Wittinger**



Lynn Donaldson





## HOW YOU CAN HELP

There are many ways that families, individuals, foundations, corporations, and organizations can provide financial support for MLR's conservation work.

Staff can assist you in determining the most suitable option for your financial needs.

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Call us at  
406-443-7027  
or visit  
MTLANDRELIANCE.ORG

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*John Lambing*

**Sweetgrass Hills**



Protecting Montana's  
Open Landscapes

HELENA OFFICE

324 Fuller Avenue, Post Office Box 355 • Helena, Montana 59624-0355  
406-443-7027 • [info@mtlandreliance.org](mailto:info@mtlandreliance.org)

GLACIER/FLATHEAD OFFICE

470 Electric Avenue, Post Office Box 460 • Bigfork, Montana 59911-0460  
406-837-2178 • [mlrnw@mtlandreliance.org](mailto:mlrnw@mtlandreliance.org)

GREATER YELLOWSTONE OFFICE

Post Office Box 10843 • Bozeman, Montana 59719-0843  
406-579-5481 • [mlrgy@mtlandreliance.org](mailto:mlrgy@mtlandreliance.org)

BIG SKY OFFICE

35 Marketplace Street, Building #5, Post Office Box 161554 • Big Sky, Montana 59716-1554  
406-594-1570 • [mlrsw@mtlandreliance.org](mailto:mlrsw@mtlandreliance.org)

[MTLANDRELIANCE.ORG](http://MTLANDRELIANCE.ORG)

