



## **MLR Conservation Award – 2021 Little Belt Ranch (Owners: Tim and Carmen Sheehy, Matt Sheehy)**

The tragic events of September 11, 2001 inspired 15-year-old Tim Sheehy to serve his country. In 2004, at the age of 18, he joined the military, and worked his way into the elite Army Ranger and Navy SEAL units. Tim met his wife, Carmen, who was also a Marine, while serving in Afghanistan, and the two spoke of moving to Montana when their military careers were over. While serving in Afghanistan, Tim was wounded, and awarded the Bronze Star with Valor and a Purple Heart. After retiring from the military in 2013, and with a new child, Tim and Carmen decided to start anew in Big Sky Country. They moved into a tent on a small 60-acre farm outside of Belgrade, where they enjoyed Montana’s scenic views, and looked forward to growing their family. As a veteran pilot, Tim saw an opportunity to apply some of the airborne technology he had

used as a Navy SEAL to benefit public safety, such as search and rescue, law enforcement, and wildland firefighting.

In 2014, Tim and Carmen founded Bridger Aerospace, with the goal of providing services for ranchers who had lost cattle, search and rescue, and locating wildland fires for the U.S. Forest Service. However, it quickly became evident that the aerial sensor technology developed by the company had real-world applications beyond finding the stray Black Angus. Tim recalled that as he got to know the wildland firefighting industry better, he and his partners started to understand the real structural challenges that the United States has with regard to its aging aerial firefighting fleet. Bridger Aerospace is now one of the largest aerial firefighting companies in the nation, with over 20 aircraft and growing. The sensor technology Tim and his team developed is used to map wildfires, and has been converted to help the military detect enemy drones attacking troops. Today, the business is located in Bozeman and employs 300 engineers, pilots, and mechanics.

In 2019, Tim and Carmen Sheehy and Matt Sheehy purchased the Lazy Daisy, Daisy Dean, and Robidou ranches in an attempt to reconsolidate the historic Cameron Ranch in Meagher County. At over 7,000 deeded and 10,000 federal and private leased acres, the newly formed Little Belt Ranch is approaching 20,000 contiguous acres along the Little Belt Mountains. In 2020, the Sheehy family partnered with The Montana Land Reliance (MLR) to permanently conserve the ranch, ensuring it will remain scenic and open space in perpetuity.

When asked why he chose the Lazy Daisy, Tim noted, “Central Montana is my favorite part of the American West. It is an amazing region with very special people and an incredible landscape. It’s tough country, windy, cold, and remote, but that’s what drew me to it. Central Montana is kind of like a time warp. Other scenic valleys have gone the way of luxury resorts and subdivisions, but the Martinsdale area is still big ranch and farm country. We are committed to keeping the ranch in agricultural production and ensuring it stays as one contiguous operation for as long as we can.”



MLR is pleased to award Tim and Carmen Sheehy and Matt Sheehy the 2021 Conservation Award in recognition of their work in protecting the Little Belt Ranch. When asked what it means to have a conservation ethic, Tim stated, “We do not own the land, we are just the current stewards of it. Someone else will walk the ranch in 1,000 years, and they will have no idea who I am. It’s important to me that we leave it better than we found it. God isn’t making any more land, and we need to take care of that which we have.”

