



Protecting Montana's Open Landscapes

NEWS
SPRING 2024

CELEBRATING 2,000 MILES OF RIVER AND STREAM FRONTAGE CONSERVED

Alexis Bonogofsky

Since 1978, MLR has partnered with landowners to protect over 2,000 miles of river and stream frontage through conservation easements.

That's roughly the distance from western Montana to New York City, as the crow flies. This accomplishment represents miles and miles of riverfront that will never be built on, to the delight of wildlife and anglers.

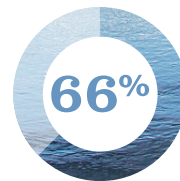
"It's taken decades of partnerships leading us to this exciting point, with big stretches of the Smith, Missouri, Yellowstone, and Madison rivers permanently protected from any riverfront development," said Kendall Van Dyk, MLR Managing Director.

Riverfront conservation means much more than a better view from the water for recreationists. Conservation easements on private property along rivers and streams ensure that critical wildlife habitat corridors remain intact while water quality and streambank ecosystems are spared from risks involved with rapidly expanding housing and other development.

"For my family, owning a ranch along the Missouri River came with a responsibility to protect it for future generations," said ABN Ranch owner Rick Anderson. "We have to think of watersheds

as a whole, and building along the river for a view has a cost. I was grateful to partner with MLR on a conservation easement and I congratulate them on to protect Montana rivers."

Rivers and streams are one of our most treasured natural resources and ensuring that 2,000 miles of riverfront is protected forever is worth celebrating. Please consider giving in the enclosed envelope so MLR can continue our work of partnering with landowners to protect the agricultural lands, fish and wildlife habitat, open spaces, and waterways that need it most.



Two out of three
MLR easements
include stream
frontage protection



GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

Forested Properties Forever Protected

MLR is proud to announce the recent completion of two conservation easements in the North Fork of the Flathead River Valley. Owned by the Chrisman and Sullivan families, these forested easement properties are situated against the scenic backdrop of the peaks of Glacier National Park.

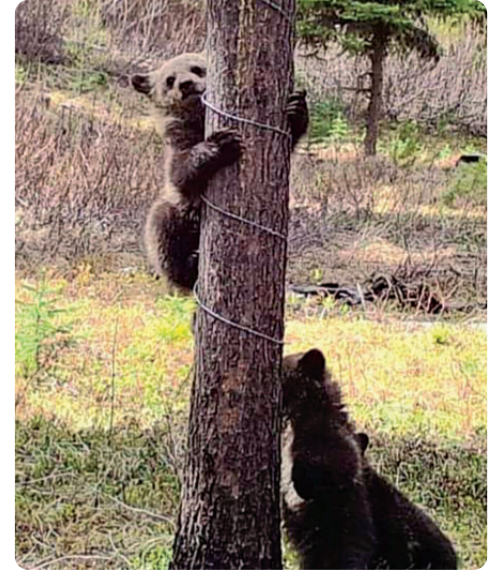
The 310-acre Chrisman property is located less than a half mile from Glacier National Park and is bordered by Flathead National Forest. Purchased by the Chrisman family in the late 1950s, the conserved property contains a diverse ecosystem with varied upland timber and riparian wetland forested habitats. The easement on this family-owned property will forever protect the land from development.

The second protected property is owned by Don Sullivan. Located less than two miles from the Canadian Border and purchased in the early 1980s, the 160-acre property is also less than a mile

from Glacier National Park and nearly surrounded by the Flathead National Forest. The property contains a diverse stand of mature cedar, fir, and western larch, and is bisected by a small tributary of the North Fork River.

Given the high degree of biodiversity on both properties, the conservation easements on the Chrisman and Sullivan properties qualified for funding from the Heart of the Rockies Initiative-Keep it Connected Program and MLR's Jeff Shryer Fund. Facilitated by MLR's Greater Yellowstone Manager, Kathryn Kelly, and dedicated to Bozeman's Jeff Shryer, the Jeff Shryer Fund provides funding for properties with high biodiversity and landowners who support natural resource education.

Both properties contain complex forested ecosystems that provide habitat and cover for deer, elk, moose, mountain lion, lynx, black and grizzly bear, gray wolves, wolverine, and bald eagle.



Both properties contain complex forested ecosystems that provide habitat and cover for many species, including grizzly bear.

Don Sullivan and the Chrisman family hope that their efforts to permanently protect scenic open space and critical wildlife habitat will inspire other landowners in the North Fork to do the same.



MLR PROFILE

Jerry Iverson, Land Steward

The winds of change were palpable in the 1960s, even on a dairy farm in eastern South Dakota.

"Volcanic times," as Jerry Iverson described it. It was against this backdrop that he developed an interest in politics and activism, pursuing a degree in philosophy that taught him how to question the world's complexities. At the same time, he escaped west each summer to work on a ranch in Montana. Those western forays became permanent in 1977, when he put down roots in Big Timber that have held to this day.

Jerry built a lifestyle shearing sheep and packing horses. This work took him to remote ranches, where he got to know rural ranchers and developed a love for the peace and quiet of the wilderness. "I appreciated living in the country," said Jerry. "I wanted to do what I could to preserve the conservation values of the west."

Jerry and his wife, Linda, purchased property near Big Timber in 1992. They had heard about MLR and conservation easements through the grapevine and reached out when the land was paid off. "MLR helped us through the complex decisions of protecting your land in perpetuity. It really appealed to us, so we put a conservation easement on our 520-acre ranch in 2006," said Jerry.

The following year, MLR had a position opening for a land steward in Sweet Grass County. Jerry applied and was hired. He reflected on his time with MLR as a gratifying

experience that brought many new relationships into his life. "Limits on land use are political and change as people come and go," noted Jerry, "but MLR's conservation easements are written in stone. They are very effective in protecting the conservation values of land."

As a land steward, Jerry works diligently with landowners to make sure they understand what their easement permits and prohibits. While the job has its challenging days, it also comes with perks for someone like Jerry. "You get to see some dramatic and beautiful properties in rural places that nobody else gets to see. That's a big thing."



"I wanted to do what I could to preserve the conservation values of the west."





Wishing a Fond Farewell to Kathryn Kelly

It is with bittersweet sentiments that The Montana Land Reliance announces the retirement of longtime regional manager, Kathryn Kelly. Kathryn first learned of MLR and conservation easements in 1987 and credits that conversation as the event that changed the course of her life. She became an official staff member in April 2014, but her involvement with MLR began long before that as a volunteer, educator, and supporter.

Starting 23 years ago, Kathryn played the leading role in conserving her family ranch outside Bozeman through three conservation easements.

Those experiences inspired her to help other people do what she and her family did to protect the Kelly Ranch.

"It's been an honor and a privilege to work with landowners who are so committed and forward looking and help them protect the land they care so deeply about. It's the most important work I've ever done," said Kathryn.

Kathryn expressed gratefulness that she's able to leave the world a better place than she found it. "MLR's mission is more important than ever," she said. "With all the development pressure, we need to be doing everything we can to protect our agricultural lands, wildlife

habitat, river corridors, and open space while there are still some left to protect."

Although she has retired from the full-time staff, Kathryn has been appointed to the MLR Council of Trustees, where she will have the opportunity to offer meaningful support to the MLR Board and staff. "It's a unique position where I'll still be able to educate landowners regarding easements, act as a connector to MLR, help with events and fundraising, and continue to use the Kelly Ranch as a tool for conservation," she said.

During her time with MLR, Kathryn

"It's been an honor and a privilege to work with landowners and help them protect the land they care so deeply about."

has made a remarkable difference. She's helped dozens of families protect thousands of acres, played a monumental role in fundraising efforts,

and enhanced MLR's reputation across the Greater Yellowstone region and especially in the Gallatin County agricultural community. But above all else, she helped us understand the importance of being a trusted resource for local conservation in our communities. Kathryn has done incredible work as an invaluable member of the MLR family – we extend our wholehearted thanks for her passion and years of dedication!



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NEWS SPRING 2024

LEAVE A LEGACY OF CONSERVATION

It takes all of us to keep MLR's promise of enduring protection of agricultural lands, fish and wildlife habitat, and open space for generations to come.

MLR's work would not be possible without those who have included MLR in their overall financial and estate plans through planned gifts such as bequests, gifts of real and personal property, gift annuities, charitable trusts, life estate gifts, and more.

You can leave a lasting legacy of conservation with a gift of any size or type—with greater impact than you thought possible. Many types of planned gifts also qualify you for membership in the Forever Montana Society, which pays tribute to those who have helped MLR

create an enduring legacy of conservation and offers special membership benefits. Providing lasting conservation through planned giving enables you to support MLR's work while providing yourself with financial benefits.

MLR welcomes the opportunity to work with advisors of donors who are considering planning a gift to MLR. We are happy to offer fully confidential expertise and assistance in finding the best fit for a gift that matches the donor's financial, philanthropic, and estate planning objectives.

Please contact us for more information or to start a conversation about how we can help during the gift planning process.

Call 406-443-7027 or visit mtlandreliance.org

