



NEWSLETTER

SUMMER • 2008

Make a Donation to the Bitter Root Land Trust

We live in the Bitter Root because we enjoy the natural beauty, the friendly communities, the clean water, and the freedom to enjoy the outdoors. The Bitter Root Land Trust helps conserve family farms and ranches, and protects clean water and important wildlife habitat. Your support allows us to continue our important work. To donate by credit card, go to our website at www.BitterRootLandTrust.org and click on the DONATE NOW button. Thank you.

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Land Trust Welcomes New Executive Director

It is with great excitement and high expectations that I introduce myself to you, the friends and supporters of the Bitter Root Land Trust. My excitement comes from this new opportunity to work with the committed Board and Staff of the Bitter Root Land Trust and the Bitterroot community to conserve our unique valley. My high expectations arise from the unique conservation opportunities we possess at this moment in our community's history.

This is an historic time for private land conservation in the Bitterroot. In the past three years, the Bitter Root Land Trust has worked hard to identify and establish bedrock tools that ensure the long-term viability of private land conservation in our community. In 2005, we worked with the Ravalli County Right to Farm and Ranch Board to commission Dr. Larry Swanson's Economic Impact of Agriculture in the Bitterroot study, which established public funding for private land conservation as one of three primary conservation tools for the Bitterroot Valley. In 2006, with help from the Right to Farm and Ranch Board and the Trust for Public Land, we accomplished this goal when Ravalli County residents passed the Open Lands Bond, providing a pool of \$10 million to be used to acquire voluntary conservation agreements on critical properties in our community. In 2007, we partnered with Ravalli County to secure the largest grant in the Trust's history to help the County and County residents establish a comprehensive land-use plan that will ultimately encourage conservation of important lands in the future.

Due to these efforts, the long-term viability of private land conservation in the Bitterroot has been established. As a result, the Bitter Root Land Trust has an unprecedented number of projects to complete in this and coming years that would never have been possible without the concentrated efforts of our Board, Staff, Donors, Granting organizations, and Community Partners over the past three years. For example, this year we will bring the first projects to the Open Lands Board to fund:

Permanent protection of several properties in the Valley's most critical agricultural corridor between Corvallis and

Stevensville;

Protection of westside wildlife habitat on one critical parcel that will, alone, nearly double the number of acres the Bitter Root Land Trust has protected in its 10 year history;

Securing conservation of and public access to recreational areas at the entrance to the Selway-Bitterroot wilderness complex and the Bitterroot River.

Each of these projects provide substantial public benefit to our community by securing either agricultural viability, open space, habitat protection, public access, or a combination of these important benefits.

Clearly there is an unprecedented amount of on-the-ground conservation work to accomplish here at the Bitter Root Land Trust.

As such, we have increased our organizational capacity by hiring a Lands Director (fourth-generation Bitterrooter and BRLT founder, Steve Powell) to interface with our landowner partners on specific conservation easement projects. Robin Pruitt has just celebrated her one-year anniversary as an employee of the Trust and has been promoted to Program Manager. Robin brings endless enthusiasm for the Trust's work and a significant background in nonprofit fundraising from her days as an employee of the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation. We are fortunate she has chosen to use her considerable talents to promote private land conservation here at the Bitter Root Land Trust. Additionally, we have increased our partnerships with fellow conservation organizations such as the Trust for Public Lands, the Teller Wildlife Refuge, and Five Valleys Land Trust in an effort to encourage greater local, regional, and statewide focus on conservation projects here in the Bitterroot Valley.

My wife Stacy and I chose to make the Bitterroot Valley our home in 2000 due, primarily, to the natural beauty and open spaces that make this community so unique. Eight years later, we continue to be thankful for the privilege of living in the shadow of the Bitterroot Range and for the opportunity to help protect the valley's water, wildlife, and working lands for the next generation of Bitterroot residents.



Gavin, wife Stacy and son Andrew

2008 Tour of the Bitterroot Benefiting the Bitter Root Land Trust

Thank you to the sponsors, volunteers, spectators and racers that made the second annual Tour of the Bitterroot, held over the Memorial Day Weekend, a great success. All three stages of the race were well organized and well attended thanks to many hours of volunteer effort on the part of the Bitter Root Land Trust Board and volunteers. The best scenery and hospitality the Bitterroot Valley offers was on showcase for cyclists and spectators alike.

Despite Saturday's inclement weather, we had a significant increase in the number of racers who registered for this year's Tour. Last year, we had a total of 84 racers registered for all three stages. This year, we pre-registered 89 and another 40+ showed up to register on race day. (That's a 54% increase for those of you counting at home.)

Saturday's North Valley Road Race was grueling for both riders and volunteers as wind blew and rain fell. Sunday we were fortunate to have dry conditions for both the Main Street Café Criterium and the Ravalli County Bank Time Trial. The sun even made an appearance Sunday evening during the party and awards ceremony at Red Barn Bicycles. During the awards



ceremony, several riders commented that of the 12 road races in Montana annually, the Tour of the Bitterroot is the best race with the best venue. We hope to build on this success and make this an even better community event next year.

Thank you to the 2008 Tour of the Bitterroot Sponsors

Pigman Builders – Discover Montana Real Estate – Lakeland Feed and Supply – Ravalli County Bank – Exit Real Estate -Main Street Café – Maverick

Marketing – Valley Bicycles– Red Barn Bicycles - Ameriprise Financial – First Interstate Bank – Bitterroot Brewing - Antara Sports – Canyon's Athletic Club – Evan's Ace Hardware – Kinetic – Bitterroot Drug - Dairy Queen – Owings & Davis PC -Bella Boutique - Sam's Spade – River Rising Bakery – REI – Open Road Bicycles - Chapter One Book Store - Lost Trail Powder Mountain - Big Sky Brewing - Hammer Nutrition - Zaxon Coffee - River Otter Fly Shop-53x11 Coffee

Contact Information

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Office Hours: Mon – Fri, 8am – 5pm;
and by appointment.

About You

Is your information correct?

To make changes to your name, address, or other contact information please send corrections by regular mail to the above address or via e-mail to office@BitterRootLandTrust.org.

Volunteers are important to our success!

At the Land Trust we believe in community involvement. If you'd like to offer your special skills, dreams, ideas, or just help with whatever is going on at the moment, please call and let us know. Robin Pruitt, the Trust's program manager, will be glad to talk with you and facilitate a good match between your interests and our work.

Robin can be reached at 406/375-0956.

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2007 Fletch Newby Award



Early in the Trust's history we were very fortunate to recruit the considerable talents of Fletcher Newby. This giant of a man had spent his career as a wildlife biologist and then an administrator for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks before retiring first to Finley Point and then to Hamilton. At the Sapphire Lutheran Homes he saw the opportunity to turn a neglected swamp into a high quality wetland and pursued the grants and private funding to make it happen. He also led the effort to construct a second story

viewing room overlooking the wetlands and wrote a book about the wildlife now thriving there.

Fletch joined the Trust as a Board member but soon became interested in the baseline studies that provide the documentation essential to every voluntary conservation agreement. He taught himself the intricacies of archival photography and global positioning and brought his considerable understanding of biology to the task. His walks with our clients always brought a deeper appreciation of the variety of life on their land and a greater commitment to its protection. His quiet dignity and authority were very inspiring to all of us in the Trust and when he passed away, we agreed to establish an annual award to recognize others who make an exceptional contribution to the work of the Trust.

In 2007 the Board named Dan Huls as the recipient of this award. Dan has been a tireless civic leader for many years with his service to the County's Planning Board, the Right to Farm and Ranch Committee, the Teller and as a strong and effective voice for the interest of agriculture in many forums. Dan led the Impacts of Agriculture Study, an analysis of the economic significance of agriculture in the County, which resulted in the successful campaign to establish the \$10 million Open Land Bond. His personal credibility and commitment along with Rob Johnson, Mike Pflieger and other members of the Right to Farm and Ranch Committee were critical in this effort.

The Trust is currently engaged in discussions with several agricultural owners who are considering placing permanent protections on their land and applying to the Open Land Program for support. This program will help the Trust close more agreements since the Program can cover the associated costs. Before these funds were available it was difficult to encourage an owner to both give up development value in their land and take money out of their pocket to do the right thing. The Program can also compensate the owner for some of the value that they are giving up.

We are ever in the debt of Dan Huls for his leadership and vision and to Joan and the rest of his family for their support of his work. The Open Land vote was a watershed event for the Trust and it would not have happened without Dan.

First pre-application submitted to the Open Lands Program

We are excited to announce that we have submitted the first pre-application to the Ravalli County Open Lands Program. In April the Bitter Root Land Trust partnered with the Grover family to submit the first pre-application to the Ravalli County Open Lands Program to help fund conservation of the 840 acre Sawtooth Ranch west of Hamilton.

The Open Lands Program was created in 2006 by the passage of the Ravalli Open Lands Bond. The program is designed to provide local public funding to help acquire conservation easements on critical lands in our community.

Over the last two years the Bitter Root Land Trust has worked with Ravalli County to create an Open Lands Board to review applications to the program and recommend projects for funding to the Board of County Commissioners. In 2007

we assisted the Open Lands Board in developing review criteria and establishing an analytical framework to guarantee sound expenditure of the Open Lands funds. As of the beginning of 2008, the program is ready to accept applications and the Bitter Root Land Trust has been working extensively with local landowners to bring the first projects to the Open Lands Board for review. After two years of hard work by many members of the community, the pre-application for the Sawtooth Ranch project signals that the Ravalli County Open Lands Program is truly open for business.

To learn more about the criteria and the Open Lands Board call the Bitter Root Land Trust at 406-375-0956 or visit the County Website: www.co.ravalli.mt.us/planning/OpenLandsBoard.htm.

Thank you to our Grand Visionary Supporters!

Mary Fox

Jerry and Carol Parker

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Frank Godchaux

Diane Thomas – Rupert and Paul Kink

Nina and Edward Bonnie

Allie Weissman

Leigh Knodler and Jean Celli

Grant and Rebecca Kier

Thank you for sharing our vision for the Bitterroot Valley in which our clean water, wildlife habitat, and working farms and ranches are protected for future generations.

Consider Making a Grand Visionary Pledge

Our Grand Visionaries are members that make a 3-year pledge of \$1,000 or more per year. Such gifts provide us with an increased ability to budget future work while reducing the demand on annual fundraising efforts.

In 2007 our Grand Visionaries doubled their investment when their pledge helped us secure a \$5,000 matching grant from the Cinnabar Foundation. We currently have 11 Grand Visionaries and our goal is to have 20 by year's end. As we move forward we will continue to find ways to make every dollar that each of you gives us go further than ever before.

Water, Wildlife,
&
Working Lands
For
All Generations

Building Neighborhood Coalitions

While we have several larger projects underway, we are working on a new conservation strategy that uses the strengths of smaller parcel sizes to overcome the threats they pose to natural resource protection. In general landowners on smaller parcels know their neighbors relatively well and are acutely aware of the impact they have on each other. We are cultivating these neighborhood relationships in key drainages and encouraging neighborhood-wide conservation projects. We most recently engaged a group of land owners in one of our Valley's most historic agricultural corridors. These landowners were recently invited to a meeting at the Corvallis Grange to explore their land conservation options as a group. Over 30 landowners attended, representing over 2000 contiguous acres and several 3rd and 4th generation owners. We are currently engaged with five of these landowners in conjunction with the Open Lands Program. If you are interested in learning more about neighborhood conservation strategies please call Steve Powell or Gavin Ricklefs at 375.0956.

