

NEWSLETTER

WINTER • 2008/09

Make a Donation to the Bitter Root Land Trust

We live in the Bitterroot 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.

DONATE NOW
SECURE DONATIONS
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Grand Visionaries

Carol and Jerry Parker
Diane Thomas-Rupert
Jean Celli & Leah Knodler
Allie Weisman
Grant and Becks Kier
Dick Thornburgh
Frank Mansell
Frank Godchaux
Nina and Edward Bonnie
Thank You For Your Support.

Current Board Members

John Ormiston, President
Kathy Good, Vice President
Gail Goheen, Treasurer
Karen Talbot, Secretary
Doug Nation
Tonia Bloom
Tori Nobles

Departing Board Members Thank you for your Commitment to the Bitter Root Land Trust

Ross Rademacher
Steve Benedict

Welcome New Board Members

Jim Brown, Engineer
GSK

Jim Blackburn
Fisheries Biologist

...We believe that preserving the family heritage and protecting the agricultural way of life in the Bitterroot Valley is the best legacy we can leave to the Valley and the memories of those who believed in the value of the land as a source of food and a grand environment in which to raise a family...

Janet Wood Farley
& Laurie Wood Gundlach

Wood Family Legacy

In 1896 Albert Wood and his family began agricultural operations on fertile land between Corvallis and Stevensville in the Bitterroot Valley. Generations later, Albert's great granddaughters and current owners, Janet Wood Farley and Laurie Wood-Gundlach, were determined to preserve the agricultural heritage of the Wood Family Ranch by partnering with the Bitter Root Land Trust to execute a conservation easement protecting their land. On January 12, 2009 their vision was affirmed when the Ravalli County



Board of Commissioners unanimously approved funding from the Ravalli County Open Lands Program for the Wood Family Ranch Conservation Easement.

The 265 acre easement marks the first easement to receive support from the \$10 million bond passed by voters in November, 2007 and is the

largest property conserved by the Bitter Root Land Trust to date. This property, which has been managed by the Trexler family for two generations will continue to be farmed and ranched in the future. We thank everyone, from our committed supporters to our local decision makers, who made this possible.

Letter from the Executive Director:

It's hard to believe that it been just one year since I joined the Bitter Root Land Trust as your Executive Director. What a year it has been. Over the past year I have had the true privilege of meeting some of the most dedicated, conservation-minded neighbors in our valley. I have been humbled by their dedication to the land and their recognition of its significance to our community. Visiting with these landowners reaffirmed that the conservation land ethic is thriving in the Bitterroot right now, and voluntary private land conservation is the primary tool landowners are using to make on-the-ground results happen. As these landowners are planning the future of their land, they are not only considering the legacy they want to leave their families but the larger legacy they are leaving our community. I am inspired by their commitment not only to our community today but their generous commitment to generations to come. As Stacy and I prepare to welcome the newest addition to our family this summer, I am grateful for the opportunity to work with landowners in our community who are ensuring my son Andrew and his sibling-to-be will be able to share this magnificent landscape with their children and grandchildren. This is a truly exciting time to report to you, our friends and supporters, on the state of private land conservation in the Bitterroot Valley.

Ending 2008 Strong:

2008 was a dynamic year for the Bitter Root Land Trust, filled with significant challenges and substantial successes. Despite an extremely challenging economic climate for nonprofits (and many others in our community) our supporters helped us increase income by 22% over 2007. Contributions to our endowment increased its principal by over 50%. At the same time, we were able to reduce our operating expenses by 8%. Overall, our financial health has never been better.

In December, the Ravalli County Open Lands Board celebrated a major milestone by reviewing and recommending its first conservation easement seeking Open Lands Bond funding – the 265-acre Wood Family Ranch (see story above). The Board and Staff of the Bitter Root Land Trust were proud to partner with the Wood family on this great project that will ensure this historic Bitterroot ranch remains available for agriculture forever.

Beginning 2009 even stronger:

In January, we celebrated as the Board of County Commissioners officially approved funding for the Wood Family Ranch Conservation Easement.

The conservation momentum continued as we submitted a second project for Open Lands funding in January, the 145-acre Bell Family Conservation Properties, comprised of

two separate holdings – 100 acres including the confluence of Skalkaho Creek and the Bitterroot River and a beautiful 45-acre agricultural property on the banks of Sleeping Child Creek. We are thrilled to partner with three generations of the Bell family to protect these unique properties.

The conservation land ethic is thriving in the Bitterroot, and voluntary private land conservation is leading the way. Our opportunities for delivering on-the-ground conservation results are greater in 2009 than they've ever been.

Neither the Wood's nor the Bell family's projects could have occurred without the commitment to conservation exhibited by our supporters (through their direct contributions to the Bitter Root Land Trust) and our community (through its support of conservation projects via the Open Lands Bond Program). These successes are your successes and the long-term conservation gains will be enjoyed by future generations.

Perhaps most encouraging is the fact that our recent success with the Open Lands Program appears to be increasing landowner interest in conservation. Over the past few months we have

received letters of intent (written expressions of a landowner's desire to place a conservation easement on his or her land) from six more landowners, owning a combined total of over 2,100 acres, further insuring that the pace of conservation in the Bitterroot will increase in the coming years.

The Bitter Root Land Trust looks forward to a busy and productive 2009 as we anticipate submitting several more projects to the Open Lands Program, including the first neighborhood project, in which multiple adjoining landowners work together towards a common vision of protecting the unique habitat spanning their collective properties. We believe these neighborhood projects are the future of conservation in the Bitterroot. They provide a voluntary, incentive-based framework for adjoining landowners to shape a predictable future for their neighborhoods, while providing greater protection for critical agricultural and wildlife resources than can be achieved by one landowner alone.

Our challenge now is to meet the landowner demand for our services with the highest degree of professionalism. To that end, in 2009 the Bitter Root Land Trust will contract with an independent consultant to perform a comprehensive audit of our operations, policy-making, and procedures to insure we are providing our land protection services using the highest degree of professionalism possible.

In the first few months of 2009, we are already poised for our best year ever in terms of critical Bitterroot Valley acres protected. With your continued support for private land conservation, we will secure the on-the-ground conservation opportunities that our local landowner partners have brought to us. I look forward to sharing these 2009 successes with you.



Gavin Ricklefs, Executive Director

Contact Information

Bitter Root Land Trust

P.O. Box 1806
307 State Street
Hamilton, MT 59840

406/375-0956, fax 375-0952

Web: BitterRootLandTrust.org
E-mail: office@BitterRootLandTrust.org
Office Hours: Mon – Fri, 9am – 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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BITTER ROOT



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Hamilton, MT 59840

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2008 Fletch Newby Award



For contribution to furthering the work of the Bitter Root Land Trust

When our Board of Directors set out to choose the 2008 Fletch Newby Award Winner - it wasn't a tough decision. Long overdue - the Board unanimously voted for, Board President, John Ormiston. A retired Forest Service Wildlife Biologist, John has been lending his expertise, time, and good humor to the Board for over nine years. John has been the volunteer Stewardship and Monitoring Coordinator for 3 years. He often

says the best thing about monitoring is being out on the ground with the landowners and learning about their dedication to the land. To put it in John's words, "it's a pleasure to meet with landowners to let them show-off their care for their land and their conservation ethic". John's enthusiasm for the work of the Land Trust is contagious. Whether it's monitoring a property, fundraising or conducting a board meeting – John keeps everyone entertained, interested and excited about our work! Receiving the Fletch Newby Award was especially meaningful to John because he had a long time professional association with Fletch Newby, having first met in 1966.

Community Garden



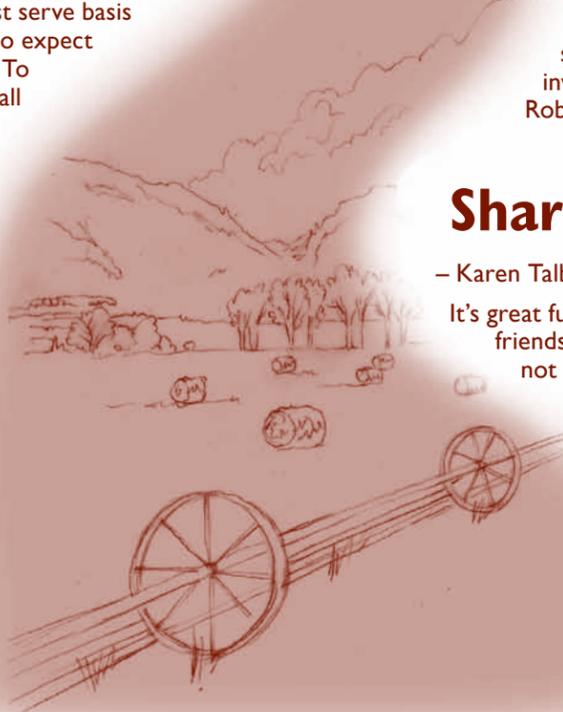
bitter root
community
gardens

15' x 15' organic garden plots available. Plot rental begins March 1, 2009. Aged manure, stocked tool shed, and automatic irrigation are included! Cost is \$20 for the season + \$10 deposit to be returned if your plot is left clean in the fall (or can be carried over to secure your plot for the following spring). Plots are available on a first come, first serve basis so call soon....we do expect to fill up this year! To reserve your plot call Ellie @ 381-2564.

Volunteer for Veggies Program

The Bitter Root Community Garden is starting a new work exchange program this year. If you would like to volunteer work hours in exchange for vegetables this is for you! The first Saturday of the month will be the volunteer day where you can put in work hours in exchange for veggies or a coupon to get veggies at a later date. Volunteer dates are: May 2nd, June 6th, July 4th, August 1st, September 5th, and October 3rd.

Water, Wildlife,
&
Working Lands
For
All Generations



Letter from the Board President:

Generosity of our donors shines during difficult times for nonprofits

Every year, I am amazed by the generosity of BRLT donors. Throughout the year individuals and businesses in our community make significant contributions to conservation in the Bitterroot Valley by donating to the Bitter Root Land Trust, and year-end 2008 was no exception. BRLT donors truly stepped-up in 2008, with long-time supporters continuing (and often increasing!) their support and many new donors showing their support for our conservation efforts by opening their wallets and checkbooks.

We know these are challenging times for many nonprofits and it was incredibly humbling to see our donors make BRLT their charitable priority in 2008. The funny thing is, you'd never realize these are challenging economic times by looking at the charitable giving of BRLT donors. You've all made a huge commitment to conserving the



best of the Bitterroot Valley, and I thank you.

Seeing that kind of commitment is what makes my job as BRLT Board President so much fun. It's the same commitment to land conservation I see every day from our professional staff, the passionate landowners of

our community, and my fellow BRLT board members. (I'm biased, but I don't think there's a better, harder working non-profit Board of Directors in the Bitterroot.) In many ways, I have the easiest job: Working with a staff, board, and landowners who share a strong land conservation ethic in a community that supports protecting its valuable open lands.

Thank you, donors and friends of the Bitter Root Land Trust for your commitment to protecting water, wildlife, and working lands for future Bitterrooters.

John Ormiston, President

Tour of the Bitterroot

July 18 & 19

Mark your calendar for the third annual Tour of the Bitterroot! Whether you enjoy cycling, hiking, jogging, rafting, we all recognize the importance of protecting these landscapes where we recreate. This year all levels of cyclists have a chance to get in the action! We would love to have all of our supporters out there peddling for the Land Trust!! If you aren't quite ready to take on the Tour – consider signing up as a volunteer – all volunteers get a free t-shirt and are invited to join us at the post race party at Red Barn Bicycles! Call Robin at 375-0956 for more information or our website.



Share a Good Cause With Your Friends

– Karen Talbot - Development Committee Chair

It's great fun to share "good things" with our friends. We share recipes, hikes, wine – why not share a good cause. Consider inviting the Board and Staff of the Bitter Root Land Trust to your next get together or hike. We'd love to share the exciting work we have going on right now and learn more about your concerns and hopes for the valley. All you need is a few interested friends and we'll do the rest...Call Robin at the Land Trust for more information 406-375-0956

