

BITTER ROOT LAND TRUST

Legacy

Winter / Spring 2015

BITTER ROOT



LAND TRUST

Director's Notes

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It's been said that winter is a time for reflection – a time to slow down, to turn inward, and store energy for the seasons to come. Conversely, spring is a time for renewal, activity, and a high rate of growth. Here in the Bitterroot, we've been experiencing spring-like conditions since early January. Similarly, the Bitter Root Land Trust has been experiencing spring-like growth and activity all winter. We hope there will be time for reflection at some point but for now, we're too busy enjoying this unprecedented period of growth, energy, and conservation success.

This edition of Legacy includes many examples of the spring-like conditions here at BRLT. In closing the books on 2014, we celebrated many successes: The creation of a new Strategic Plan that will help the BRLT board and staff increase our positive impact in the community during the next three years and beyond; The successful donation of the Steve Powell Park to our partners at the City of Hamilton, profiled on page 3; the finalization of two additional conservation easements on family farms, one of which, the Gingrich Farm, is profiled on page 5; The reorganization of our staff to provide more focused support for our conservation and stewardship programs; and the incredible generosity of you, our supporters, who helped make 2014 our most successful fundraising year ever.

The initial days of 2015 have been no different. I'm excited to announce that after five years with BRLT, Kyle Barber has taken on a new role as BRLT's Conservation Director. Similarly, following an extremely successful first year with BRLT, Lea Guthrie has taken the reigns of our expanding stewardship program (see page 4). These changes have been made in anticipation of adding two new staff-

ers in 2015 to help increase the scope and pace of BRLT's conservation work now and in the future. As more and more of our friends and neighbors seek conservation futures on their own family lands, BRLT is committed to expanding to meet that demand, ultimately leaving a cleaner Bitterroot River, intact wildlife habitat, and a legacy of working farms and ranches for the next generation of Bitterroot residents and guests.

Without your continued support, none of the important work highlighted in this publication is possible. I hope you take great pride in the legacy of water, wildlife, and working lands you have helped make possible with your donations of money, time, expertise, land, conservation easements, and strong belief in a bright future for the Bitterroot Valley. The BRLT board and staff look forward to celebrating another record year for conservation in our community with you in 2015.

All the Best,



Gavin Ricklefs
Executive Director



Steve Powell Park

PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE WELCOME

The Bitter Root Land Trust is pleased to announce the completion of the Steve Powell Park. BRLT initially purchased this property from the Taber family, and, in late 2014, donated the land to the City of Hamilton for public enjoyment. The park, named in honor of BRLT's founding father and former Lands Director, Steve Powell, is a unique place where the three elements of BRLT's mission come together: Water from the Bitterroot River; Wildlife which is abundant in the park, and Working Lands with the Corvallis Canal, the first water right on the Bitterroot River, originating in the park. Steve easily and naturally brought people of different backgrounds and points of view together, emphasizing their common thread: A shared love of the Bitterroot Valley. This park where people and wildlife are welcome is a tribute to Steve Powell and how he lived his life.

When BRLT purchased the land in 2012, the property comprised the largest remaining undeveloped riverfront parcel in the City of Hamilton, encompassing 22 acres of grassy meadows,

gravelly river banks, century-old ponderosa pines and swaying cattails. It includes wetlands that provide habitat for moose, waterfowl, and other wildlife as well as a variety of recreational opportunities for community members.

John and Helen Taber were the previous owners of the riverfront property, and established a long record of stewardship. John passed away in 1997 and Helen passed in 2010. According to John and Helen's daughters, Jeannie Taber Green and Lynn Diane Taber, John and Helen enjoyed having a natural landscape in their backyard. Jeannie and Lynn said their parents always envisioned that the land would remain pristine forever and available for the public to enjoy. Thanks to Jeannie and Lynn and BRLT's family of supporters, the Tabers' vision has come to fruition, and the land that was once John and Helen's secret garden is protected and publicly accessible in perpetuity.

This Spring, Steve Powell Park will officially open for public use and we will celebrate with the entire commu-

nity. With the help of several generous donations, BRLT is currently overseeing construction of footbridge spanning the Corvallis Canal, which will provide a safe pedestrian path over the canal. Once completed, the community will have access to another incredibly scenic stretch of the Bitterroot River; a natural area immediately adjacent to Hamilton.

This was a collaborative community effort, and an excellent example of how public and private entities can work together. Steve Powell Park would not have been possible without the generous support of the Taber family, Ponderosa Trust, Michael J. Connell Foundation, Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital, Sapphire Lutheran Homes, the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust, the Ravalli County Open Lands Bond Program, Travelers for Open Land, and numerous donations from neighbors and community members ranging from \$1 to \$5,000. Working together has made this great project possible. Thank you all for your support.

Stewardship

NOT JUST A WORD, BUT A PROMISE

When many people think of the Bitter Root Land Trust, they think of conservation easements and the land trust's success in conserving the Bitterroot's water, wildlife, and working lands over the years. However, our work doesn't stop when the easement is finalized, in fact, it has just begun. The Bitter Root Land Trust holds conservation easements in perpetuity. That means we're responsible for ensuring the conservation values protected by each easement are honored by all future landowners. Landowners who choose to voluntarily place a conservation easement on their land know the important conservation values present on their land and want to see them handed down to future generations.

That's where the Bitter Root Land Trust's Stewardship Program comes in. At a minimum, we visit every landowner each and every year. We get out on the land and tour the property, noting changes, improvements and identifying ways in which we can support our land

owners in their good stewardship. As lands change hands, we interact with the new or potential new owners to make sure they have a good grasp of what the conservation easement means and how to play a positive role as an owner of conservation easement lands.

PROJECTS:

In addition to those ongoing responsibilities, we engage in special projects that assist landowners with ongoing land management challenges such as weeds or infrastructure. This past year, with the help of the Montana, Noxious Weed Trust Fund, we distributed over \$10,000 to landowners in the historic agricultural Burnt Fork Drainage to help with weed management. Twenty six landowners with over 3500 acres of land are involved in the 2 year project, with over 2,000 of those acres receiving active weed management!

BRLT staff also works to integrate our conservation efforts into our community and last year was

no exception. We hosted several stewardship days on BRLT conservation easements, including noxious weed pulls along Skalkaho Creek and the Bitterroot River, and removing browse protectors from trees and shrubs on a restoration project along Willow Creek. Kids in our community had ample opportunity to engage with the land trust as we worked with over 700 local students from Hamilton to Florence through workshops in the field and presentations in the classroom focused on the Bitterroot's water, wildlife and working lands.

So what are we looking forward to in 2015? More services for land owners and our community like noxious weed abatement grants, educational signs and trail infrastructure at Steve Powell Park. We'll have plenty of opportunities to volunteer and get community members out on the land for fence removal, weed pulling and other stewardship activities.

If you are interested in volunteering on the land, please contact Stewardship Coordinator, Lea Guthrie at 375-0956.



Bitterroot Mountains from the Burnt Fork near Stevensville.



Kyle Barber (left) and Bob Popham.

Gingerich Farm

In the heart of the Corvallis Agricultural corridor, the Gingerich Family Farm will continue to be a beautiful working farm for generations to come. For 40 years, Bob and Corrine Gingerich have worked these rich soils, and passed this tradition on to their son, Bob Jr., who hopes to pass it on to his son as well. Thank you Gingerich family for your lasting gift of conservation. Thank you to the Ravalli County Open Lands Bond Program for funding the project. And thank you, BRLT family, for making good work like this possible with your continued support!

Leaders In Conservation IN HONOR OF FLETCH AND STEVE

Every Fall, Bitter Root Land Trust board members put their heads together and reflect on those who have made outstanding contributions to land conservation in the Bitterroot Valley over the past year. For the last 12 years, BRLT has awarded the Fletch Newby Award, recognizing a community member who has made outstanding contributions to furthering the work of the BRLT and local land conservation. Kyle Barber, BRLT's very own Conservation Director was awarded the 2014 Fletch Newby and long-standing board member, John Ormiston stated, "Who better to receive it than a member of the staff who has become the face of the organization to every landowner who has left their legacy of protected land in the past five years. Kyle skillfully and thoughtfully leads landowners through the rigorous and time-consuming process of conserving the land they love. He's an outstanding example of a young man pursuing

his passion for land conservation and richly deserves the recognition of the annual Fletch Newby Award."

Beginning in 2013, the BRLT board recognized a special individual—Dan Severson—for his work with landowners to leave a legacy of private land conservation in the Bitterroot, beginning the tradition of The Steve Powell Award. This past November, the board recognized another special individual in Steve's honor: Fourth generation Corvallis landowner and BRLT conservation easement donor, Bob Popham. For years, Bob has been an ambassador for agriculture, conservation, and community; talking with fellow farmers and ranchers in Corvallis and throughout the Bitterroot Valley about the future of agriculture, always listening to their questions and sharing his own family's experience. Bob was deeply touched by the recognition and expressed his sincere hopes to continue to be an asset to landowners and honor his friend, Steve Powell.





Last year's Tour of the Bitterroot. Kids take their place at the starting line of the Dirt Road Derby.

Outreach

COMMUNITY IN ACTION

2014 was an amazing year connecting with kids all over the valley. Bitter Root Land Trust staff worked with over 700 elementary, middle and high school students from Hamilton to Florence including the Bitterroot's own 7th grade Earth Stewardship Day, and the All Valley Find Your Future Event, and the University of Montana's Bio-Control students pulled more noxious and invasive weeds at the newly created Steve Powell Park.

The Youth Conservation Expo at Teller Wildlife Refuge in May, though cold and rainy, did not deter hundreds of kids and their parents from showing up at the Teller Slack Barn to learn about the many conservation groups and their positive impacts in the Bitterroot. From sportsmen conserving special mule deer and elk habitat, anglers supporting stream and river habitat for native cutthroat trout in the Bitterroot River and its tributaries, to Bitter Root Land Trust's conservation success with working lands, wildlife habitat, clean water, and public access projects; the Youth and Conservation Expo brought so many youngsters together to learn about the exciting conservation going on locally and how they can be a part of it.

Two and 1/2 days were spent at the Maki Farms on the James conservation easement with AmeriCorps Volunteers removing browse protectors from a restoration project that began a decade ago. The shrubs were bursting out of the protectors!

For 2 and 1/2 days volunteers and BRLT staff worked at the Skalkaho Confluence removing houndstongue, a noxious and invasive weed. Not only did we end up covered in houndstongue seed pods, but we also found an abundance of native plants including rose hips, elderberry, wild catnip and nightshade, and we got to work with one of our favorite partners—the Bitter Root Water Forum!

The success of the Bitter Root Land Trust is built upon many things, including donations of time and many hours of hard work. We are lucky to have such a strong group of volunteers who are always willing to give freely of their personal time helping with stewardship projects, monitoring, non-profit administration, events.

If you want to help make a difference here in the Bitterroot, please contact Emy Royce, BRLT's Program Administrator at: 406-375-0956 OR emy.royce@bitterrootlandtrust.org



Supporter Spotlight

2014 VOLUNTEERS: THE BACKBONE OF THE BITTER ROOT LAND TRUST

Aaron Riley

Bob & Arlene Bailey

Bob & Jane Popham

Brian & Penny Menning

Chad & Tracy DeVall

Christian Pruitt

Christina Dunbar

Cindy Jimmerson

Craig Martens & Lost

Trail Ski Patrol

Dan Kerlake

Dan Severson

Dan Severson

Dave Schultz

Doug Nation

Dylan Goheen

Frank Pelfrey

Fred Weisbecker

Gail Goheen

Gary MacLaren

Heather Riley

Jan Abel

Jean Steele

Jenny West

Jess Mogan

JoAnn Grant

John Ormiston

Jon Stefani and the
Montana Campus
Compact

Julia Bowman

Kate Davis

Kate Naughtner

Kathie & Ron Messer

Katie Nielson

Katie Vennie

Kim Selig

Kurt Barber

Lisa Fazzino

Lou Royce

Marcus Daily Memorial
Hospital

Marshall Bloom

Mary Millin & People
First

Maureen & Charlotte
Powell

Mike McArthur

Monica & Hannah
Grable

Nat & Margot Sturgis

Nate & Kate Stone

Peggy Ratcheson

Pete Seifert

Quinty Smith & Gordon
Maus

Robin Pruitt

Rosemary Johnson

Scott Kurfman

Seth Anderson

Skip Kowalski

Stephen Goheen

Steve Fain

Steve Fullerton

Steve Peckinpaugh

Suzanna McDougal

Tonia Bloom

Tori Nobles

On behalf of the board and staff at the Bitter Root Land Trust, thank you. It is an honor to work with you and have your knowledge, counsel, support, and time over these many years. Thanks for answering the call.



170 S 2nd Street,
Suite B
Hamilton, MT 59840
406.375.0956

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There are many ways to contribute to the Bitter Root Land Trust.

MAKE A DONATION:

anytime—by mail, on-line, or plan a gift with the help of your financial advisor. **Plan for the Future, with a gift to the Future.**

VOLUNTEER:

stewardship, monitoring, mailings, events, or share your knowledge and expertise as a BRLT committee member.

PO Box 1806

Hamilton, MT 59840

Or

170 S 2nd Street, Suite B

Hamilton, MT 59840

406.375.0956

"My main reason for being involved with the Land Trust is that it offers members of this community an opportunity to come together to preserve the best of the Bitterroot – its beauty, open space, wildlife habitat, and heritage. That's the heart of why we all live here and love it so much." – Gail Goheen

bitterrootlandtrust.org