

BITTER ROOT



LAND TRUST

LEGACY



"Protecting places for wildlife to thrive and places for people to connect with nature is something we can all do together."

Dominic Farrenkopf, Hamilton City Mayor



I'm Grateful...

As the father of three young native Montanans, I often marvel at the unique opportunities my children have as a result of growing up in the Bitterroot Valley. They love the Bitterroot's beauty and already share a connection to this place.

We have a tradition in our family that each kid gets to have a fishing trip alone with Dad when they're old enough to camp overnight and cast a fly to rising fish. As the years go by faster, and friends and technology become of importance, the memories and impact of those "alone trips" become increasingly sweet. My oldest, Andrew (embarking on his teenage years this fall), continues to fish our favorite Bitterroot creek, something he began when he was five years old.

Tatum, my middle child and budding wildlife biologist, prefers fishing the creeks of the upper Big Hole. I will never forget our fist alone trip: I had packed books, lunch, and activities in case she tired of casting quickly. Seven hours and countless fish later, it was dad asking daughter, "Is it time to go yet?" We kept a couple brookies that day and feasted as we watched the sun set over the Pintlar Mountains.

So this summer, it's Cate's turn. We'll spend a weekend together walking the banks of a yet-to-be-determined Bitterroot tributary, with no time constraints, no school or siblings, or cell phones, to distract us. And we'll create new memories that will shape our relationship as parent and child, and to the land.

BECAUSE OF YOUR SUPPORT

Because of your support, kids like Cate have places in the Bitterroot to connect to nature, their families, and the world around them. It's these small moments, year-after-year, that create life-time conservationists. While we have much more conservation work to do, and local families continue asking for our assistance to protect the lands that make our region so special, I'm grateful for all that we, as a community who cares, have done together.

Why is that? Because everyone needs a turn, summer after summer, day after day, to spend time outside, throughout their lives. It's not something we can take for granted yet—our health, wellbeing, and the appreciation of nature depend on it.

—Gavin Ricklefs, Executive Director

Did You Know?

“It’s up to us to make sure that kids have the chance to play and experience nature and farms and ranches, close to home.”

If you’re a parent, or spend time with a young child, you intuitively know what research is confirming: children are spending less and less time outside. In fact, according to a recent study by Seattle Children’s Research Institute, the average child under the age of 16 plays outdoors only 12 minutes a day.

If we care about our kids’ health this is a problem we need to address as soon as possible. Too much technology and disconnection with

nature can lead to difficulty focusing, amplified ADHD, higher blood pressure, increased obesity and stress on their eyes—just to name a few challenges.

And if we care about the future of conservation, we also know from other research that the regular interaction with nature and the out-of-doors is critical to creating a lasting connection. It’s up to us to make sure that kids have the chance to play and experience nature and farms and ranches, close to home. Places you made possible like Steve Powell Park and Auch Angus Ranch. Conservation and their health depend on it.





For us, it was the right thing to do

There was never a dull moment at home with his mom Dolly and dad Ed. Mom worked right alongside the men. Many times outpacing them. Dad could usually be found fixing farm equipment, elbow deep in engine grease. Running a small ranch required an “all hands on deck” approach to getting the work done.

And that’s still true today.

After his dad passed away in 2014, Dwight Auch’s mom told him—with unwavering conviction in her eyes—they

“As more working land is preserved in this magnificent valley, I hope that more young people who choose agriculture as a career will be able to do so.”

Dwight Auch, Auch Angus Ranch

had to make sure the ranch stayed in ranching hands. Over time, they’d seen a great deal of farmland rapidly convert to other uses. Yet it wasn’t so simple. How could they keep it in

ranching knowing that someday, they might have to sell it, if even that meant generations from now?

FUTURE RANCHERS

“It was after a lot of thought and discussion that my mom and I decided that the right thing to do, for our family, was to conserve our ranch,” explains Dwight. “We felt we could honor our family, and make it possible for future ranchers to work the land, for years to come. It just made sense.”

The Auch’s know, perhaps better than many of us given their ranching heritage, that there will likely be pressure to develop farm and ranch land with the uncertainty

of agriculture markets, unforeseen family hardships, and the continual growth of communities. When Dwight reflects on why he wanted to conserve the land, he quietly says “I feel so fortunate to have grown up and been able to spend so much time outside on our small cattle ranch in Corvallis. Now, there’s a greater chance that others will be able to do that in the future; it gives us peace of mind.”

More affordable access to land is part of that and often conserved lands are more affordable than those competing for the estate or development market. The Auch’s see that as a real benefit. “As more working land is preserved in this magnificent valley,” says Dwight, “I hope that more young people who choose agriculture as a career will be able to do so.”

Other ranchers and farmers are coming to the same conclusion. Thanks to you, our members and supporters, we are now in conversations with a number of local families to help them figure out if conservation is right for them.





Burnt Fork & 61-Bar Ranch Create Something Special

Dick and Karen Smith built a life together full of intention and hard work, and it showed in their conviction and passion for protecting their beloved Montana ranch. Over a few decades, they lovingly pieced together 506 acres of beautiful green pastures that anchor the Burnt Fork area just north of Stevensville in Ravalli County.

Before he could realize his conservation vision, sadly

Dick passed away. This past year Karen made sure to fulfill their dream and ensure 61-Bar Ranch would always be a place where cattle can roam, and wildlife can wander.

Their vision and passion has inspired others. Now, other families are planning to conserve an additional 1,000 acres creating a neighborhood community that will allow agriculture and wildlife to flourish.

It's only with you...

Farming and ranching families from Sula to Florence want to conserve the very lands that ensure the vitality of our region's streams and rivers, economy, and heritage. They know that once the land is gone, it's gone for good. Your support makes it possible to protect what we all cherish.



YOU'RE MAKING THE FUTURE OF CONSERVATION POSSIBLE

"I have a much greater appreciation for the work that goes into sustaining farmland now."

– Olivia , High school senior

On a cold spring day, students from Hamilton High School went to Middle Bear Farm in Victor. Their task, as part of their schools highly regarded "Envirothon Team" was to consider challenges like irrigation delivery, weed control, grazing limitations, fencing, and crop production.

For years, Hamilton High School has sent a team of young resource managers to the Envirothon championship to compete with high school students from all over Montana. A big part of their success has been the hands-on approach to learning, and on this day, it was one of solving real-life issues facing landowners.

Sheep, cattle, hay fields, crops, an orchard, and a bee keeping operation make up this diverse 115-acre farm—not to mention an important stretch of wildlife habitat along Middle Bear Creek—conserved in December of 2013 by Cindy Jimmerson.

Working together as a team, they tackled tough questions that landowners and professional conservation staff have to grapple with: How can we protect the wildlife habitat while keeping the large herd of elk on the property from damaging the orchard and consuming other valuable crops? How many cattle and sheep can the pastures support while keeping the land healthy and avoiding over grazing? Can the creek be used for irrigation and stock water without harming the riparian area?

INSPIRING YOUTH THAT CARE

Conserving lands for generations means ensuring that generations care. High school senior Olivia, who has been studying aquatics, noted that it's challenging to manage the farm, remarking, "I have a much greater appreciation for the work that goes into sustaining farmland now."

When the teens asked Cindy Jimmerson why she protected the farm, Cindy beamed, explaining "I did it for you and for your kids and grandkids." It's that generosity of spirit and investment in our youth that you make possible. Thank you.





THEIR SONG BRINGS ME RIGHT BACK TO THAT DAY

I remember it like it was yesterday. I was just eleven years old, on a field trip to the Eldridge Conservation Easement in Victor. Land owner, Howard Eldredge greeted our class with a warm smile in the cool misty rain. Steve Powell, from the land trust, guided our adventure. We were all excited to be outside for the day.

“Growing up, I was lucky to be surrounded by adults who value our natural resources, and rural landscape, and believe in protecting it for the future.”

We explored Sweathouse Creek studying water bugs, blades of grass, and flowers. The musical trill of red-winged blackbirds called to us through the cattails. Almost a decade later, their song brings me right back to that day.

The day I knew I wanted to be a part of something bigger than me—to protect the beauty and wonder of the natural world.

Last year, as a senior in high school, I got to intern at the land trust helping with the Barn Dance and created a short video for social media. I had a blast celebrating and promoting local conservation. Again, I found myself a part of something bigger than me. I’m so grateful for what I learned through that experience.

Last Fall, I left Montana to go to college in New York with a renewed passion for protecting Montana’s landscapes. I don’t think I would feel

this way if it weren’t for my time spent at the land trust. I’m excited about my future career in environmental law.

We all value community, the connection to nature, and our sense of place. Without the ranch down the road, the creeks where trout spawn, and trails where I can hike when I’m back home--the Bitterroot just wouldn’t be the same.

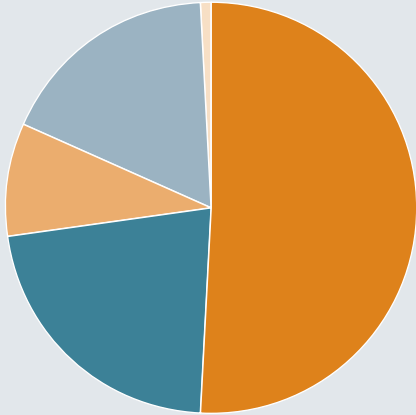
Growing up, I was lucky to be surrounded by adults who value our natural resources, and rural landscape, and believe in protecting it for the future. I also witnessed how easily all these things can be lost, forever. This contrast between love and loss of the place only strengthened my outlook on conservation.

The good news is, we can all be a part of something bigger than ourselves and make a difference protecting the beauty and wonder of our natural world.

– **Elise Streibel**, Intern



How **you** made a difference in 2017



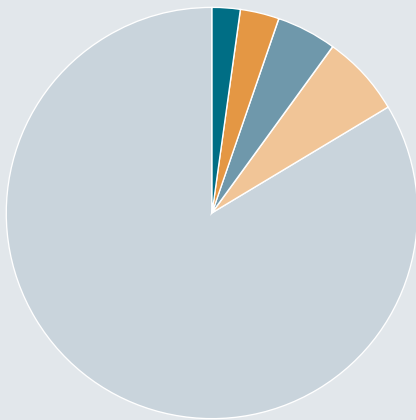
Income

- Conservation Acquisition Funds* \$872,436**
- Individual Donations \$377,306
- Private Foundations \$152,275
- Land Donations \$299,900
- Investments \$11,928

Total: \$1,713,845**

*Conservation Acquisition Funds

- USDA Farm Bill
- Ravalli County Open Lands Bond Program
- Montana Noxious Weed Trust Fund
- State of Montana Recreational Trails Program



Expenses

- Education and Outreach Programs \$31,500
- Administration \$39,993
- Fundraising \$59,989
- Land Stewardship Programs \$84,020
- Conservation Easement Programs \$1,081,870**

Total: \$1,297,372

**\$872,436 in conservation income and expense passed directly from funders to landowners at project closings

THANK

You make conservation happen,

When land and water inspire generations

Have you ever wondered what the Bitterroot Valley would be like without the wide-open spaces, the meandering rivers with trout, the meadows and hills dotted with wildflowers? How about those elk, bugling in the fall or cattle making their way across green pastures?

Thanks to you, and so many in our community:

- Conservation took another major step forward in 2017—conserving critical lands and partnering with people from all walks of life.

- Local families like the Smith's and Auch's ranchland will now be available for future generations of ranchers—and wildlife—rather than becoming a maze of haphazard development.

- This year is shaping up to be something you can really be proud of with habitat for moose and elk, expansive ranchlands throughout the Burnt Fork and Lone Rock areas of Stevensville, and new trails underway.

Together, we are creating a place we can all call home.



YOU

every day, all year long

Local heroes, one month at a time

Imagine getting up in the morning knowing that this month you have again made a difference. That's what our monthly donors do. As Donna Haglund put it, "I have the satisfaction of knowing that a modest contribution each month adds up to a big impact throughout the year. For me and Jay, it makes a lot of sense to invest in local land conservation."

Monthly giving, whether it's \$100 or \$5 a month,

is a great way to make conservation happen every day. It's easy to do and really makes a difference. Feel free to call Lauren Rennaker at 406.375.0956 if you have questions or you can sign up on our website at bitterrootlandtrust.org.

For a full list of those who contributed financially as well as with in-kind services and volunteer hours, go to our website at: bitterrootlandtrust.org

Is conservation right for you?

"People ask, 'how can you give up some value? Why does that make sense to you?' You know, maybe I'm sacrificing a little bit, but it's really, really minimal compared to what my grandmother and my dad did before me. Those are the ones that held this place together."

– **Dan Severson**

Everyone conserves their land for different reasons, but each share something in common: they love their land.

By discussing your cherished property with you, we can assess the protection opportunities that best fit you and your property's resources, your financial or charitable objectives, and your vision for the future of your land.

We are here for you! If you have questions, please call Conservation Director, Kyle Barber at 406.375.0956 to learn more about how to protect your land, or land in your community, and be a part of keeping the Bitterroot Valley special for future generations.





Kick up your heels for Conservation!

Land Trust Barn Dance 2018

Come celebrate the local conservation you're making possible at Lazy Burnt Fork Ranch on Saturday June 30th.

See for yourself what it means to conserve a ranch, for generations to come.

At the Barn Dance you'll find curious cows, friendly horses, green pastures and meet a wonderful couple who believe in the positive impact that conservation has on our community. Steve and Catherine Peckinpaugh are delighted to welcome you to Lazy Burnt Fork Ranch in Stevensville.

Tour the recently conserved Lazy Burnt Fork Ranch, grab an ice-cold drink and venture down the kids' fishing hole on the creek at this family-friendly casual community event.

All proceeds will go towards the conservation of important farms and ranches, wildlife areas, local trails, and streams and rivers.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- Sit down to food from area farms at a community-style supper
- No-host bar by the Wild Mare
- Live country music by Cash For Junkers!
- Fun Silent Auction and raffle items that highlight Bitterroot businesses (check them out on our website) bitterrootlandtrust.org
- Kids' fishing hole on Middle Burnt Fork Creek, bring your poles!
- Family-friendly lawn games to play

Tickets \$25 per person | 12 and under are free; purchase tickets in advance before they sell out. Reserve your spot for the Walk the Ranch Tour by June 24th—choose either the 5pm or 5:30pm time.

You don't want to miss this!

Get your tickets online at www.bitterrootlandtrust.org. For more details visit Facebook or contact **Emy Royce at 406.375.0956, or emy.royce@bitterrootlandtrust.org**





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Serving the community to protect the farms and ranches, rivers and streams, wildlife habitat, and recreational trails of the Bitterroot Valley for all generations.

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Thank You! In 2017 you brought conservation to life...



55,769

footsteps on park trails



526

volunteer hours



1.6

miles of trout fishing access



154

elk bugles heard on protected rangelands



Want to stay updated on conservation projects, volunteer opportunities and upcoming events? Sign up for eNews at:

bitterrootlandtrust.org