



“Tis the season for holiday giving. Please consider a special contribution to the Land Trust that will provide a lasting gift we all cherish - open land.



Oh How We Celebrated: Special Landscapes, Especially Now!

October 7 was a very special night on which we celebrated the special landscapes in the Helena area. More than 400 guests gathered at the Helena Civic Center for PPLT's Harvest Moon Banquet and Auction. During the social hour the guests enjoyed games of chance, hors d'oeuvres donated by Land Trust volunteers, and mood-setting piano music by Alex Swaney.

Harvest Moon committee volunteers and friends superbly decorated the room during the day. Special thanks goes to Paula Thiede of Flowers and Gifts for their assistance.

A delicious dinner was served by the Mediterranean Grill, followed by heavenly Park Avenue Bakery desserts. Board President Connie Cole was delightfully surprised by a special thank you from the board and staff for her 10 years service to the Board and 3 years of service as the president, and received a standing ovation. Connie will step down as Board President in January but will remain on the board as a Director.

Auctioneer Mike Casey and his terrific volunteer spotting crew did a fabulous job of enticing the guests to bid on the vast array of unique donated items. And bid they did! People enthusiastically vied for the unique experiences, trips, artwork and custom-made furniture offered for auction. The entire evening was an outstanding show of strong support by the community. We heartily thank you for helping us fulfill our mission through your generosity!

Without the tremendous effort of volunteers, supporters and business sponsors, this event could not have been the terrific success that it was! The board and staff are very grateful to everyone who played a part in making it such a spectacular evening for the special landscapes we all cherish.



*Anderson Zur Muehlen & Co. PC • Power Townsend Co.
Windbag Saloon and Grill • American Federal Savings Bank*

Trail on New Mount Ascension Parcel Completed

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Ken Eden
Phil Hess
Paula Jacques
Sarah Jaeger
Art Keeler
Kris Larson
Tom Likens
Dawn North
Bob Person
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Andy Baur
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Diane Boyd
Lands Protection Coord.

Maggie Engler
Development Director

Heather Nese
Admin. Services Coord.

Emmett Purcell
Trails Assistant

As mentioned in our previous newsletter, Prickly Pear Land Trust recently acquired a key 40-acre parcel encompassing the top of Mount Ascension. This parcel is critical because it not only protects a piece of our scenic backdrop, it also connects two non-contiguous parcels of Helena open space. The acquisition finally allows non-trespass access to Mt. Ascension's summit.



Within days of completing this transaction, volunteers were out in force to help build a new trail. Along with a week's worth of hard work from the Montana Conservation Corps, volunteers from PPLT, the Helena Bike Club and the Great Divide Cycling team put in two full evenings to get the job done. Along with new trail construction, many of the old eroding jeep roads were closed

down. And, following tradition, Randy Beckner of the Windbag Saloon and Eric Grove of Great Divide Cyclery provided burgers and beer to celebrate the trail's completion and the volunteers' work. Special thanks to Dave Dalthorp and Buck Rae for organizing volunteers and to Will Harmon for help with the trail design.

This beautiful new trail takes users to the Mt. Ascension Ridge. From there they can either go to the "summit" of Mt. Ascension to the north or continue south on the Entertainment Trail to the next rocky overlook which is even higher than the "summit". Either way the views of the Helena Valley and the surrounding mountains are outstanding.

PPLT intends to work with surrounding landowners to shore up public access to the ridge and install signs and gates to control unauthorized motorized use on PPLT lands and public open space.

PPLT took out a loan of \$95,000 to complete this important project and will work hard to pay it back in the next several years. We hope you will consider a special donation to help us defray these costs. This parcel is too important to lose.



Be sure to explore the new acquisition and trail to enjoy what makes our home so special. Take Paydirt to Pail Rider, the new trail begins at the end of Pail Rider.

Meet MALT: the Montana Association of Land Trusts

The Montana Association of Land Trusts (MALT) is the newly formed umbrella organization representing the 11 land trusts operating in Montana. Prickly Pear Land Trust was chosen by its peer organizations to act as the fiscal and administrative sponsor for MALT until it becomes a separate entity. MALT's mission is *to promote and support excellence in private voluntary land conservation in Montana through leadership, collaboration, education and outreach.*

In July, MALT hired its first Executive Director, Glenn Marx, to help organize the group and take the lead on legislative issues. MALT is moving ahead in a coordinated and united fashion on several fronts to help foster private land conservation in Montana.

MALT is working on a proactive set of legislative initiatives that includes a transferable tax credit bill. Transferable tax credits on conservation easements have been implemented in several other states allowing another market-based tool to assist in the protection of family farms and ranches. Preliminary discussions on the proposed legislation have already taken place with key administration officials, interest groups and elected officials.



MALT Executive Director
Glenn Marx in Yellowstone

Other MALT activities include:

- developing a comprehensive response to Senate Joint Resolution 20 (study resolution which passed in the 2005 Legislature) regarding recording and handling of information about conservation easements at the state and county level;
- addressing the issue of the lack of qualified conservation easement appraisers in Montana, which creates a bottleneck in timely completion of easements;
- participating in the development of the Montana Comprehensive Fish & Wildlife Strategy to evaluate target areas for wildlife protection and associated funding; and
- developing a proposal for a substantial educational outreach program to promote an understanding about the value of land trusts, conservation easements and private land conservation.

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Keep the Water Flowing: Water Bill Creates Flood of Memberships

Water is more than something we like to have—it is a basic, absolute necessity. We pay our water bills to keep the water flowing from the city through the pipes into our homes to sustain us. Membership dues for the Land Trust are like the water flowing into our homes. The funds we receive from our annually renewed memberships are one of the basics of Land Trust life. Without membership dues coming in, we would cease to exist.

The Membership and Outreach Committee is constantly looking for ways to increase our membership, as well as retain those individuals and families who are currently members. This year the committee suggested that the Land Trust ask the City of Helena permit us to put an informational membership insert into the water bills for October 2006. What a fabulous idea this turned out to be! We have had 42 memberships generated thus far from the water bill insert, with 10 being renewals and 32 being new members!

A special thanks to Nancy McLane and all the members of the Membership and Outreach Committee for their diligent work on this, and every project. Let the water keep on flowing!

Grounded: PPLT's Land Update

This year was a banner year for PPLT's land conservation and acquisition program, and we thank you for your unfailing support to make this possible. In 2006 PPLT sold 301 acres of the 457-acre Spring Hill Claim block to the US Forest Service, acquired a 40-acre Mt. Ascension parcel, and are now acquiring two West Side parcels at the top of Holter Street. We worked with several landowners to contemplate and complete conservation easements on their properties in the Elkhorn Mountains and Helena area. We hope to complete a conservation easement late in 2006 on a 280-acre parcel near Lincoln, with restored riparian habitat that now supports a healthy trout population.

In July, the Sonoran Institute, Dr. Dan Perlman of Brandeis University, PPLT, and several conservation planners collaborated in a 3-day workshop to help PPLT with its Conservation Planning process. The goal was to help strategically identify and prioritize conservation lands through a seven-step process:

- Step 1: Identify conservation targets*
- Step 2: Collect information and identify information gaps*
- Step 3: Establish conservation goals*
- Step 4: Assess existing conservation areas*
- Step 5: Evaluate the viability of the conservation targets*
- Step 6: Assemble a portfolio of conservation areas*
- Step 7: Identify priority conservation areas*

PPLT's final Conservation Plan is still a work in progress. Stay tuned for this exciting chapter in PPLT's planning for the future!

And just recently, a popular trail was rerouted onto a public right-of-way by AmeriCorps volunteers. Thanks to Will Harmon and his son Evan for coordinating this working group. See right.....



Volunteer Spotlight: Starring Peggy Likens and Alice Elliott

Prickly Pear Land Trust depends on the talents and dedication of hundreds of volunteers who tirelessly give of their time to assist us. This month we are featuring two of our volunteers, Peg Likens and Alice Elliott. We thank them for their devoted volunteerism to help PPLT carry out our mission. Peg and Alice are the masterminds of PPLT's three video productions for Helena Civic Television. The first project, "Winter Hiking in Helena", is a lively, on-the-trail interview portfolio of the hardy people who use our public trails in winter. The second is a race-day filming of our 2006 "Don't Fence Me In" trail run and fundraiser. The third video, presently in production, will highlight conservation easements, and should air this winter on HCTV, cable channel 11. Peg and Alice have also been behind-the-scenes forces for some of our fundraising events. Peg was the Chair for the very successful 2006 Harvest Moon Banquet & Auction. We are very thankful to have these dedicated women help PPLT fulfill its mission.



Greetings! *At Grandstreet Theatre to benefit Prickly Pear*

Grandstreet Theatre offers a special partnership to Helena area nonprofit organizations by offering seven nights of theatre performances, known as the Grandstreet Benefit Performance Program. PPLT was chosen to participate in the great community program.

On **Thursday, January 18** join us at the Grandstreet at 8:00 pm for a fabulous performance of *Greetings!* This family play, written by Tom Dudzick, is billed as “a 5-character comedy about a young man who brings home his Jewish atheist fiancée to meet his very Catholic parents on Christmas Eve. With the inevitable family explosion comes an out-of-left-field miracle that propels the family into a wild exploration of love, religion, personal truth and the nature of earthly reality.”

Tickets are available now from the Land Trust office or any board member. Cost is \$16 per seat, and half of the proceeds from the night go to support the mission of the Land Trust. Our goal is to sell out the house, which will earn \$1600 for PPLT as we continue protecting special lands close to home!

Consider giving these tickets as a Christmas gift! What a super way to extend the holiday season. Mark your calendar, buy your tickets, and plan to bring a friend or two for a wonderful comedic evening at Grandstreet Theatre.

Gardenwerks' Mike Hiel Lends a Hand...and a Tractor

Access to LeGrande Cannon Trail and Mt. Helena is precious to West Side residents. For many years, folks in the vicinity of upper Power Street had to negotiate a steep, and often slippery trail and then shuffle over a highway style guardrail. With the encouragement of neighbors like Hugh and Andrea Ambrose, PPLT gathered volunteers to re-contour this short trail to make it more accessible and safe for the neighborhood. A key factor in this effort was to shore-up the trail with large boulders and add crushed gravel for a good walking surface. Mike Hiel, owner of Gardenwerks Landscaping and Nursery, stepped up and brought his trusty Bobcat loader with him. Mike, an artist with rock, created a beautiful retaining wall which greatly reduced the slope of the trail. He also placed and spread the gravel to create the fine path. PPLT hopes to add a handrail next season to make the trail even safer.

The City of Helena was also a key to the success of this project. The City provided the large boulders and gravel for the trail. In addition, they modified the guardrail to allow easy passage to LeGrande Cannon.

Thank you to Mike Hiel, City of Helena and all the volunteers that helped make this project happen!

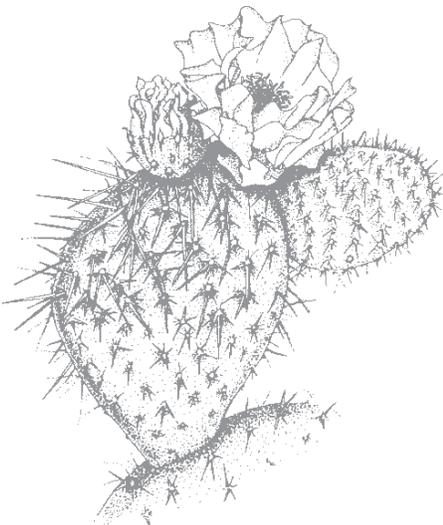




Psssst! Did you know there are pint and wine glasses for sale with the one-of-a-kind Harvest Moon 2006 logo on them? These are great for Christmas gifts and PPLT is selling 'em cheap at only \$2 for pint glasses and \$3 for wine glasses! Get yours today!

PRICKLY PEAR LAND TRUST **ANNUAL MEETING**

JANUARY 25TH, 2007 • 5:30 - 7:00 PM



- Potluck Dinner
- Give Input for 2007
- Meet and Elect Board Members & Officers

Come join us at the Lewis & Clark County Library! Bring your favorite dish to share as well as your thoughts for 2007. Your support and enthusiasm for the mission of Prickly Pear Land Trust is the bedrock of our organization. We hope to see you at this important planning event.