



openviews

Our mission is to protect the natural diversity and rural character of the Prickly Pear Valley and adjoining lands through voluntary and cooperative means. The Land Trust is dedicated to perpetuating the recreational, wildlife, scenic, agricultural and historic values of the land.

WILLIAMS RANCH

Easement Preserves Ranching Heritage

On September 24, 2009, Prickly Pear Land Trust was thrilled to complete a conservation easement on Judith Williams' 670-acre ranch outside of Wolf Creek near the South Fork of the Dearborn River. The ranch has been in Ms. Williams' family since the 1940's. She felt very strongly about putting a

conservation easement on the property to protect her family's legacy and the ranching tradition there. The property is located in an important wildlife corridor, and provides habitat for deer, elk, mountain lions, bears and many other species. The Rocky Mountain Front is visible from the bench above the farmhouse, and the property is bordered on

three sides by the Bay Ranch, which is under conservation easement with the Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks. Together, these two ranches create 4,510 contiguous acres of protected land, preserving historical uses, valuable wildlife habitat and riparian areas.

A huge thank you to our partners in this exciting project: The Nature Conservancy of Montana, and the federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program. This easement couldn't have happened without their help and a generous donation from Ms. Williams.



PAGE 2:
A brief history
of the ranch in
Judith Williams'
own words

Andrea Silverman

Pine Beetle Update

Open Lands Forest Fuel Removal & Forest Ecosystem Restoration Strategy

We extend our gratitude to Brad Langsather, Natural Resource Coordinator for the City of Helena, for sharing his knowledge and expertise around the pine beetle infestation. —Ed.

THE CITY OF HELENA'S open lands total 2,140 acres with approximately 65% of the area contiguously covered by coniferous forests. Ponderosa pine, which is susceptible to infestation by the mountain pine beetle, dominates approximately 80% of Helena's open lands forests. The mountain pine beetle is the most aggressive, persistent and destructive bark beetle in North America. Following a thorough examination of the forested portions of these lands, city staff determined during the winter of 2008–2009, that approximately 500 acres of severely infested ponderosa pine stocked timber stands were in immediate need of treatment. An additional 610 acres of forested lands within Helena's open lands system are susceptible to becoming infested prior to the end of the current mountain pine beetle outbreak.

Forested areas adjacent to the city of Helena are part of

an ecosystem that historically supported frequent wildfires. These fires maintained a mosaic of grasslands interspersed with open park-like forests and, in some cases, denser stands of trees.

The development of a grazing industry across central Montana in the mid to late 1800's, combined with the initiation of wildfire suppression activities, led to a significant decrease in the occurrence of wildfires in the forests surrounding

Helena. Without the natural control of wildfires, and less grass competition, conifers have encroached across significant areas that historically supported rangelands. In addition, the exclusion of the natural "thinning" due to fires has allowed dense thickets of conifers to develop that have the potential to promote high intensity, difficult-to-control crown fires in the event of a wildfire ignition. These factors, combined with the recent occurrence of warmer winters

and repeated periods of below normal precipitation, have resulted in the creation of forest ecosystem conditions within Helena's open lands system that have proven to be extremely vulnerable to mountain pine beetle infestation and corresponding tree mortality.

While the city of Helena has successfully completed forest fuel treatment projects in the past, the on-going mountain pine beetle epidemic has resulted in the occurrence of sudden and

significant ponderosa pine tree mortality over extensive portions of Helena's open lands system. The combination of dead trees and high forest fuel loads presents increasingly complex management challenges of heightened risk to public health and safety from the development of heavy forest fuel loads and hazardous trees. There is also the potential for long term forest ecosystem destruction should a high intensity, crown replacement wildfire occur within Helena's open lands system.

[The strategy] outlines proposed treatment activities, estimated costs and a schedule for addressing the high level of beetle-killed trees on Helena's open lands.

The Helena Open Lands Management Plan (adopted in 2004) provides overall management goals and implementation opportunities for Helena's Open Lands. The recently-adopted "Open Lands Fuel Removal and Restoration Strategy" is tiered to the existing plan and outlines proposed treatment activities, estimated costs and a schedule for addressing the high level of beetle-killed trees on Helena's open lands. The strategy serves as an overall approach, a tool for budget and project planning and a tool for public communication. The development of the strategy utilized input from the HOLMAC forestry subcommittee, city staff field analysis and interaction with other city departments. The strategy will result in future proposed projects and funding options that HOLMAC will individually review and city staff will formally present to the Commission for approval.

The treatment of Helena's open lands will involve the harvest (removal) of mountain pine beetle-infested trees, with the exception

continued on page 2...

Williams Ranch: A Brief History

by Judith Williams

I WAS BORN IN 1941, the youngest of five siblings. My family began living on the ranch north of Wolf Creek in 1938, before purchasing it in 1942. My parents, Josie (Joe or JJ to the neighbors) and Lucile Williams, raised all five children there, as well as cattle and hay. They met in Fergus County in 1925 where she was teaching school and he was a range rider and a government trapper. Josie was educated at the Iowa Business College as an accountant, but came west as an adventure and stayed the rest of his life on the ranch. Once they settled on the ranch, Lucile was kept busy with the children, tending a

large garden plot, picking berries, canning tomatoes, gathering eggs and raising chickens. Up until electricity and running water were installed in 1947, laundry was done with a scrub board, a metal wash tub and pumped water from the well.

I acquired the ranch in 1979. It was gifted to me by my mother, but she retained a life estate. My father died five years later. He had never owned the land, apparently having it titled in Lucile's name as he was 13 years older than she. He also had the roving range rider's fondness for a few games of poker around the campfire which may have had some bearing on that arrangement.

The idea of placing the Williams Ranch in a conservation easement first came from my brother, Bruce. He graduated from the US Military Academy in West Point, NY, traveled the US extensively, did tours in Germany, Viet Nam and Korea, and Foreign Service in Greece, Italy, France and Brussels. When he came to our father's funeral in 1984, he addressed the neighbors and relatives sitting in the log chapel up the road from the ranch house. The essence of his oration was the beginning of the plan to place the family ranch under protection, which eventually evolved into the present conservation easement.



Judith Williams and brother, 1945

courtesy of Judith Williams

Ms. Williams' conservation easement is a critical part of a larger conservation initiative along Montana's Rocky Mountain Front. Numerous organizations and agencies have teamed up to conserve one of the wildest yet productive working landscapes in the nation. PPLT is proud to be among those groups and we salute Ms. Williams for her foresight and commitment this effort. -Ed.

W E R E M E M B E R

MOIRA AMBROSE

The PPLT family was saddened by the loss of a dear friend, Moira Ambrose. Moira and her family have been ardent yet quiet supporters of PPLT over the years helping us achieve some of our most significant land protection goals. Moira, along with her late husband, author Stephen Ambrose, made a significant contribution to the land trust in 2001 making it possible for the 17 acre Swaney Parcel to be added to Mount Helena City Park. This parcel, located on west Le Grande Cannon Boulevard is now a key trailhead access to the Park. Our thoughts are with the Ambrose and Tubbs Families.

JOHN WARDELL

Many of us knew John Wardell, head of the federal Environmental Protection Agency's Montana office. He is revered for his leadership in restoring some of Montana's most toxic landscapes such as the historic mining and smelting in and around Butte, lead abatement in East Helena and the historic clean-up of the town of Libby. Wardell's family and many friends have made significant contributions to PPLT in his memory honoring his conservation legacy. We thank them and send our thoughts to the Wardell Family.

This Mountain is Your Mountain

WITH WHAT SEEMED LIKE a pretty big gamble back in 2006, PPLT acquired the 40 acre Alpine Meadows Lot 14A encompassing the summit of Mt. Ascension. This lot was critical in connecting two non-contiguous City owned parcels and allowing construction of the 2006 Trail. We were hoping that with this key acquisition complete, we would gain the support to add to this success.

And successful it has been! Since then, you, our generous members, and our amazing partners, have come through allowing us to acquire four additional parcels totaling 130 acres. These lands not only help protect the coveted Entertainment Trail, they also preserve the finest backdrop of any city in Montana.

A great example of your generosity has shown brightly this past summer where we asked our members to contribute to our purchase of the Porter parcel as a way of matching a grant from the

Cinnabar Foundation. Through this special appeal, we more than doubled our required match and raised over \$15,000 towards this acquisition. Thanks to all of you who contributed to this and all of our work on Mt. A.

This winter we will transfer these lands to the City of Helena for inclusion into its Open Lands program.

Our efforts on Mt. Ascension, however, are far from finished. There are many more parcels on in jeopardy of development and/or closure of public access. We honor property owners' rights and pride ourselves on working cooperatively with them to continue to acquire these key parcels. We thank you for your help supporting PPLT's efforts on Mt. Ascension. We also thank the City of Helena, Montana Fish & Wildlife Conservation Trust, The Conservation Fund, Montana FWP Recreational Trails Program and the Cinnabar Foundation.

Pine Beetle, continued from page 1

of those beetle-killed trees retained for wildlife habitat (snag trees), combined with the thinning of live, un-infested trees on an approximated 15-20 foot tree crown-to-crown spacing. Additional forest fuels modification work will involve the pruning of lower limbs to a height of 6-10 feet on those trees 20 feet tall and greater and a pruning height equal to 1/3 of the total tree height on those trees less than 20 feet in total height.

Cut waste material generated during thinning and harvesting will either be chipped and spread on the forest floor or hand piled for burn disposal depending upon the topography and accessibility of the given treatment site. Material too large to be chipped or burned will be taken off-site for disposal, fuel wood donation or marketing.

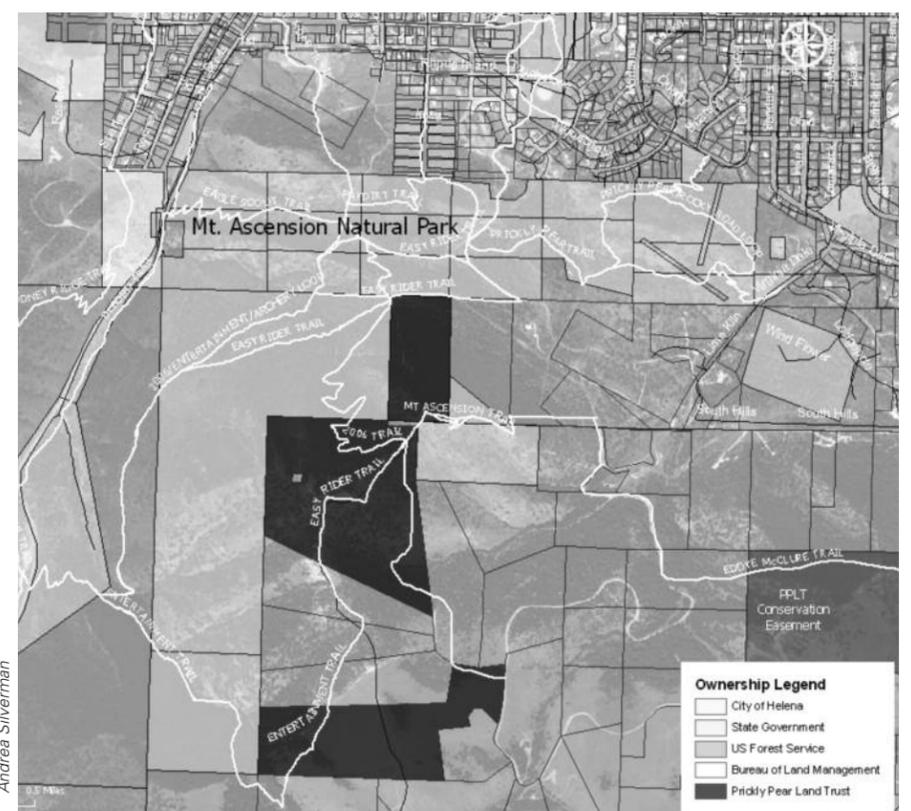
As the city of Helena nears completion of the open lands forest fuel treatment process, there will be a need to adjust the direction of Helena's Open Lands Management Program from that of reducing risks to public safety and infrastructure, to restoration of Helena's open lands forests to include a mosaic of tree species, age classes and

stocking levels that are more resilient to the stresses of climate change into the future. Restoration activities will include tree planting, grass seeding, weed control, on-going maintenance efforts and fire rehabilitation efforts in the event of a wildland fire.

City staff will continue to be involved in numerous cooperative-planning efforts that address public safety risks associated with wildfire. Current documents that guide the city's efforts include the Tri-County Community Wildfire Protection Plan and the Helena/South Hills Population Protection Plan. These plans recognize hazards associated with current forest conditions, wildfire risks and necessary evacuation routes. Mitigation actions have been identified and prioritized to improve evacuation routes and staging areas in the event of a fire in the wildland-urban interface. The city's proposed forest fuel mitigation projects are identified as high priority in these plans.

Should you have questions or would like more information, please contact Brad Langsather at 447-8454.

Dark areas show lands PPLT has purchased and plans to convey to the City of Helena this winter



Andrea Silverman

Spandex and Leather, Take 2

by Andy Baur, Executive Director

PPLT'S TRAIL POSSE headed to the mountains on a gorgeous weekend in August with hopes of completing the new seven mile section of the Continental Divide Trail (CDT) between Josephine Mine and Bison Mountain. This section of the CDT replaces the previous route which followed old roads rather than single track trail.

Following in the footsteps of the hugely successful first High Divide Trails event in 2008, a large crew of intrepid trail workers gathered at "base camp", high in the Boulder Mountains above Basin. Mountain bikers, conservationists and the pack & saddle crowd again showed up in the spirit of cooperation and desire to protect our wild lands and create better non-motorized trail opportunities. And again we were treated to the incredible hospitality of the Last Chance Backcountry

What is Montana High Divide Trails?

High Divide Trails is the nation's largest conservation agreement between mountain bikers, backcountry horsemen and women, hikers, and conservationists. The partnership includes:

- Highlands Cycling Club (Butte)
- Mile-High Back Country Horsemen
- Helena Bicycle Club
- Wild Divide Chapter, MWA
- Last Chance Back Country Horsemen
- Prickly Pear Land Trust
- Helena Trail Riders
- Great Divide Cycling Team
- Helena Outdoor Club
- Continental Divide Trail Alliance

Horsemen and the Helena Trail Riders, highlighted by a steak dinner on Saturday night and a delicious breakfast and coffee on Sunday morning.

Our goal this year was to finish a two mile section of beautiful single track begun last year. Unbelievably, we completed two days worth of work the first day! So on Sunday we decided to try and "drive the golden spike" and connect this section of trail to a section completed last year. Unfortunately, we ran into a familiar field of stumps that took about 30 minutes each to remove. So Sunday became more of a team building effort but we were pleased with the incredible overall work of the weekend and fun shared by all.

Thanks to leadership of Roy Barkley, the Helena National Forest Trail Specialist, the stump section and the remaining five miles were completed by a Forest Service contractor the following week to complete a new 14-mile loop trail. While the snow fell too soon for many of us to sample the new single track, early reports are that it is amazing. Signs are ready to be installed as soon as the snow clears in the Spring and we can't wait to go check it out.

We are already planning next year's High Divide Trail event where we will work to reroute a nearby trail converting it from an unsustainable two-track to a sublime single track. Stay tuned...

Harvest Moon Celebrates Success

Thanks to community-wide support, Prickly Pear Land Trust enjoyed yet another wonderful celebration of its successes at this year's Harvest Moon Banquet. The theme of "On the Rise" was very appropriate as PPLT's programs and geographic impact are growing.

The evening was highlighted by the appearance of **Senator Jon Tester** who gave a heartfelt speech about the importance of

PPLT's work and his efforts in the Senate in support of the extension of conservation tax benefits. The Senator also good naturedly participated in the auctioning

of a flat top haircut which was proudly won and displayed by none other than **Eric Grove**.

This event was possible only with the significant efforts of a small yet committed volunteer crew.

We owe our thanks to them:

Jonathan Krauss, Chair
Peggy Johnson, Auction Chair
Maleen Olson, Arrangements Chair
Stuart Segrest, Publicity Chair
Mardell Ployhar, Volunteer Chair
 as well as **Michele Herrington**, **Bob Walker**, **Ken Eden**, **Sarah Jaeger**, **Kris Larson**, **Jane O'Driscoll**, **Paula Jacques**, **Ann Mary Norton** and **Mary Schuller**.
 Kudos for a job well done!

We would like to extend a hearty thank you to those who attended, as well as our entire membership!



Tom Likens

In addition, the incredible support demonstrated by the Helena business community set new records for sponsorship this year! Please thank these generous supporters with your business.

We thank our Harvest Moon business sponsors

the Base Camp
 Gear for the Great Outdoors

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 ATTORNEYS AT LAW

ALLEGRA
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Gardenwerks
Sussex Construction
Taco Del Sol
Valley Bank

Wild and Scenic Film Festival Draws Enthusiastic Crowd

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE who came out to the Helena Middle School to support PPLT at the Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival on October 23. We were very excited to see such a great, enthusiastic crowd at our first film festival.

The night began with a few family oriented films which were followed by an inspiring story about how one person can really make a difference. In the film, *Papa Tortuga*, we watched as Fernando gathered friends and family to help save Lora Sea Turtles from extinction in Vera Cruz, Mexico.

We then followed a group of kayakers as they visited some of the greatest rivers in the world, all of which are threatened by hydroelectric projects. The film, *The Last Descent*, was made even more inspiring when the director and Helena native, Katie Scott, discussed the film with the audience and answered questions.

Copies of her film can be purchased at The Base Camp or online at thelastdescent.com.

Next, Marisol Becerra showed us how she raised awareness about the pollution in her neighborhood caused by a power plant. We then watched as Bozeman based director Eric Bendick journeyed from the Thoroughfare of Yellowstone to Banff National Park to the Florida Everglades highlighting sustainable road projects and wildlife corridors in *Division Street*.

Finally, the night was nicely summed up in the words of the title character from the last film *Wombat*. "This is your home; it's the only one you've got. So cherish it and protect it."

We'd like to thank Carroll College, our great group of volunteers, Tom and Peg Likens, and Helena Middle School for making this event possible. And a very special thanks to The Base Camp for sponsoring the Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival! For more information

on any of the films, please visit www.wildandscenicfilmfestival.org.

Special thanks to

the Base Camp
 Gear for the Great Outdoors

A Special Call for Cash

As you may know, PPLT has a special fundraiser within our Harvest Moon Banquet called Call for Cash. Auction bidders are encouraged to raise their bid cards at the level that they wish to make a cash donation. Every year, we try to tailor this part of the auction to aptly reflect the work we focused on during the year.

This year our work, and thusly the Call for Cash, focused on our spectacular South Hills Trail System.

To one PPLT family, the trail system is incorporated into their daily lives as a way to rejuvenate and explore. When planning the Call for Cash, this family stated their willingness to create a catalyst for generous giving during the auction. Because the funds raised during

the call for cash this year went to further the Land Trust's efforts in the South Hills, **Aiden Myhre and John Alke and family** generously donated \$20,000 to be used as a match during the Call for Cash! This effectively *doubled* the amount given by every bidder,

raising a tremendous amount of money that will go to expanding and maintaining the cherished South Hills Trail System.

Without the incredible level of support from the Myhre-Alke family,

the Call for Cash would not have been the success that it was. We owe a huge thanks to them for making such a spectacular commitment to the trails and open lands in and around our community.



PPLT License Plate coming soon!

With the incredible artistry of Jeff Schuller who generously donated his time and talent, we've created a specialty license plate that captures the essence of where we live and what our work protects. Look for its unveiling this winter and be sure to request this great looking plate when renewing your vehicle registration. These plates are only an additional \$20, 100% of which goes to support our work of connecting land and people.



Stay Informed with E-News

Want to receive our newsletter through email or receive periodic news updates from PPLT? Send your email address to joanne@pricklypearlt.org and please let us know if you want just the e-newsletter, the updates, or both! By getting your PPLT information electronically you will help the Land Trust save money and trees.

Shop Online?

Be sure to go through igive.com to send a percentage of your shopping dollars to PPLT!

PPLT Staff Attends Land Trust Alliance Rally

Three PPLT staffers ventured to Portland, OR in early October to revel in the experience known as "Rally", the Land Trust Alliance's annual gathering of the land trust faithful. With dozens of seminars and over a hundred workshops to choose from, a "divide and conquer" approach was implemented. Andy headed off to workshops about land trust organizational structure; Andrea learned about other conservation projects around the nation and ways their merits can be applied locally and Heather gleaned new and exciting ways to create community-wide support for special projects.

With over 1,700 attendees representing nearly as many land trusts, networking opportunities were enormous. At regional receptions we visited with our Montana and Northwest colleagues. During the lunches you never knew who you would be sitting with, making it a great opportunity to learn what is going on with land conservation on a nation-wide scale.

A little fun was had as well. We took a "small" sampling of the fine restaurants and numerous breweries that Portland boasts, and marveled at its nationally recognized "green" infrastructure — a model for other communities to follow.

Staff truly appreciates the opportunity and we learned a lot along the way. We returned to the office energized and ready to implement all that we learned at Rally. It's exciting to witness just how much is going on in the land conservation arena—and we are glad you're a part of it!

Don't Fence Me In's First Top Dog Passes

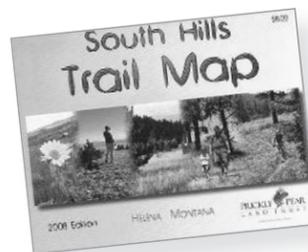
Fred Jaeger, the beloved companion of board member Sarah Jaeger, passed away on November 12. He was the first dog to collect the most pledges for the Don't Fence Me In Trail Run the Land Trust hosts.



Participating in the Trail Run for many years, Fred raised thousands of dollars to help maintain and expand the trails he loved. Our hearts go out to Sarah, and we are truly thankful for both her and Fred, and their efforts to further the work of PPLT.

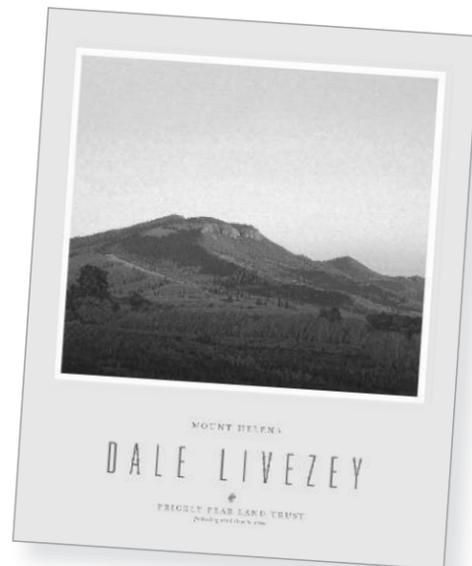
Cactus Club: PPLT's Monthly Giving Program

This program is a great way to increase your level of support while making it very easy on your pocketbook. PPLT's monthly giving program enables automatic donations every month in an amount that you specify. It is a simple way to increase your giving, without having to think about membership dues renewal dates. You can be a \$100 annual giver for only \$8 a month! Consider enrolling today. Call us at 406-442-0490 and we'll take care of the rest!



Pssst, the Holidays are coming. Need A Gift?

Support PPLT by giving a gift of a hat, tote bag, or a beautiful poster of Mt. Helena. This great poster features a striking print of Dale Livezey's painting of Mt. Helena and makes a great present for any occasion. All proceeds go directly to PPLT so not only will you be giving a great gift but you will also be supporting the land trust! Posters are available at the office for only \$28. Come and get yours today!



Or, looking for that little something to tuck into a Christmas stocking? PPLT's South Hills Trail Map is just the thing! It's chock-full of useful information about great loops, elevation gain, and user tips. Get yours today! These \$8 maps are available at The Base Camp as well as other sporting goods stores around town.

