



# 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.

## “Taking Giant Steps” at Harvest Moon

**Celebrate PPLT’s accomplishments and look toward the future at this year’s Harvest Moon Banquet and Auction on Saturday, September 22, at the Helena Civic Center.**

The volunteer Harvest Moon Committee has been hard at work since June creating another wonderful party. Count on lots of great local art, experiences, and novel new items—as well as old favorites—in both the live and silent auctions. We’ve already secured donations of a Bob Morgan original painting, another Yellowstone photo safari with Kenton Rowe, a set of Sarah Jaeger ceramic plates, dessert

of the month provided by the PPLT board, the infamous Knights of Spam-a-Lot backpacking trip, and more. There will be something for everyone, and the event usually sells out, so get your tickets ASAP!

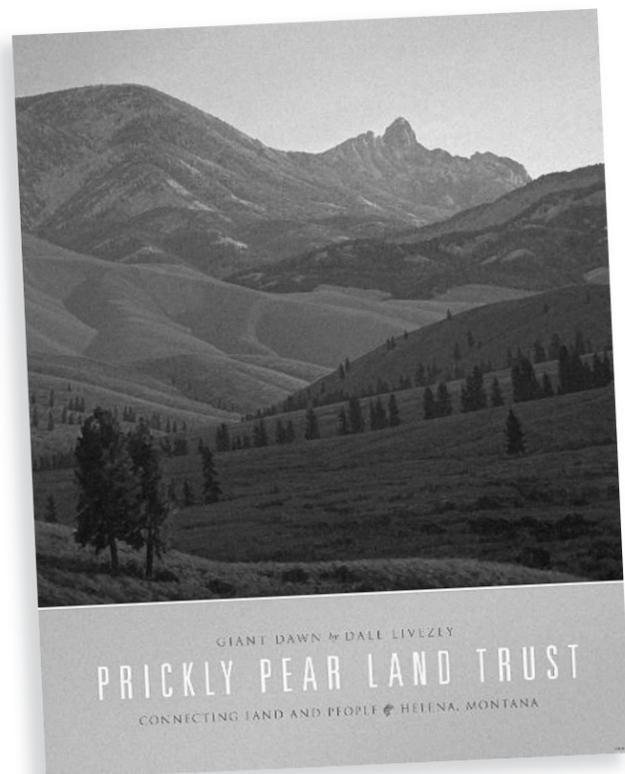
Harvest Moon is PPLT’s biggest fundraiser. Because all auction items are 100 percent donated, every penny of your purchase goes directly to further local conservation efforts. PPLT would not be able to continue its work without the generosity of our amazing community, both in your donations and purchases. Thank you!

Tickets are only \$75 and include dinner served by Chili O’Briens, wine on your table, a mouthwatering dessert donated by Park Avenue Bakery, and music by Midnight

Express. Tickets go on sale August 27. Visit our website at [pricklypearlt.org](http://pricklypearlt.org) for more information. We will be posting the auction items there as they are secured, so keep checking back.

Please join us on September 22 and help us celebrate our successes and further our mission of “connecting land and people.”

*See the list of Harvest Moon sponsors on page 2.*



*Our new poster features Dale Livezey’s painting “Giant Dawn.” Sales benefit PPLT, so get yours as soon as they go on sale.*

## Major Conservation Project in the Helena Valley

PPLT IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE its largest project yet in the new Helena Valley Heritage Initiative: the property formerly known as Aspen Trails Ranch. Some of you may remember the subdivision that was slated for this parcel: initially, 325 lots with 435 dwelling units, followed by a new proposal for a 650-unit “green” community. The original 325-lot subdivision received approval from the City of Helena, but then was contested by some area residents. The district court eventually ruled against the development and the Montana Supreme Court upheld that decision.

Enter Prickly Pear Land Trust.

A new vision for the 266-acre property came to light, one that would maintain the agricultural use

of the land, while at the same time providing a new place for the community to enjoy fishing, bird watching or a picnic.

The means of accomplishing this vision include a conservation easement and the creation of a new fishing access site and park. The easement will be placed on the majority of the property (approximately 231 acres), which is currently owned by Mountain West Bank. That portion of the land would then be sold to a neighboring landowner. The terms of the conservation easement will allow for one homesite, and will also encourage agricultural use, which is how the property has been used for more than 100 years now.

Well-known local artist Bob Morgan was actually born in the

old homestead on the property in 1929, and spent his early years there. “There was no electricity or running water back then, and there were chores aplenty. But the fishing was 20 yards away, and there were ducks and pheasants out the bedroom window,” Bob said. “All in all, the ranch was a great place to begin a life. It means more than I can say to see it preserved.”

Protecting this ground is important, not only to Bob, but to all those who cherish the agricultural heritage of the Helena Valley. The 35 acres that will not be included in the conservation easement will become the new public access site. This will permanently protect more than 1,500 feet of Prickly Pear Creek, as well as a spring creek and habitat for deer, trout, sandhill cranes, bald eagles and many other bird species. There are also excellent opportunities for restoration work on the creek to further enhance the habitat values. In fact, there are already restoration plans for adjoining properties. And there’s even the possibility of creating a new trailhead here someday!

This project wouldn’t be possible without the generous help of our funders and partners (and we’re not at the finish line quite yet either).

A grant has already been secured from the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust for a portion of the funding. The project was also recently approved to move into the Due Diligence Phase of the Lewis and Clark County Open Space

Bond process, so we are optimistic that we’ll receive funding from this source. And the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks is interested in receiving the

35-acre park parcel as a donation, which would be wonderful, as they have far more expertise than PPLT in managing land for public use.

We expect to complete this project in the next few months. If we’re successful, an important piece of Prickly Pear Creek will be protected, and we hope this project will act as a catalyst to inspire other landowners throughout the greater Helena Valley to work with PPLT to protect their way of life. This project really exemplifies the goals of the Helena Valley Heritage Initiative, which are to protect stream corridors, wetlands and fisheries; to restore fish and wildlife habitat; to protect and preserve key agricultural lands; to extend and link existing trail networks; and to create new trail corridors where appropriate.



*PPLT’s efforts in the Helena Valley will mean new access for fishing, birdwatching or a picnic on the former Aspen Trails Ranch property.*

# Trails Update

**ANOTHER BUSY TRAIL SEASON** is well under way with some wonderful new projects already completed and several more in store.

In late April, wind and the threat of showers didn't dampen the spirits of the many volunteers that showed up to build a new section of trail at Nob Hill on Helena's east side. The new route provides a complete circuit of the hill allowing for relatively easy walking or biking on one of Helena's newest open space parcels. If you would like to check it out, head east on Saddle Drive towards the Nob Hill Subdivision. Take a left at the water tank just past the intersection of South Hills Drive. You can park at the tank. The trail takes off just to the left (east) of the fence and loops right back to the parking area.

May brought plenty of showers as well, and in an abbreviated session, volunteers worked to improve the new segment of the Archery Range Trail near the intersection with the Entertainment Trail. In June, work moved on to the Helena National

Forest where a large crew showed up to improve another new trail—the Wakina Ridge Trail. Built last year, this trail provides a sustainable route up to the increasingly popular Wakina Ridge. Our volunteers worked to improve the “bench” of the trail to provide a more stable tread.

Our July trail workday was part of CDT Montana's High Divide Jamboree on Stemple Pass. Volunteers turned two miles of old road into singletrack trail and built one mile of brand-spanking new trail. There were 24 volunteers on two crews from the Helena, Butte and Missoula areas, as well as folks from as far away as Oklahoma, Florida, Arizona and Missouri! They put in about \$13,500 worth of trail labor to the Forest Service. You can listen to Dan Boyce's Montana NPR report about the weekend at <http://mtprnews.wordpress.com/2012/07/18/1391/>

As we go to print, our hearty volunteers will begin work on a new trail along the western reach of

LeGrande Cannon Boulevard from the Westridge Heights Subdivision to Silverette Street. This will nearly complete an off-street route along the entire length of LeGrande Cannon. This singletrack trail will also create a new link back up into Mt. Helena City Park. We thank PPLT board member Ken Eden and his wife, Liz, for their dedication to the LeGrande Trail since its inception in the late 1990s.

One more PPLT volunteer trail workday is planned for September 10. After gathering at the Old Shooting Range Trailhead, the crew will start on a reroute of the Rodney Ridge Trail. A new sustainable singletrack will be built to replace the steep and eroding section of the old two-track road. This trail will also create a more gradual route up to the top of the ridge. In addition, PPLT is working with the Helena National Forest on a “flow trail” in the gully on the lower end of Wakina Sky Gulch. This fun, swoopy trail will feature banked turns offering mountain bikers an exciting challenge.



Once again, the Montana Conservation Corps (MCC) has been engaged this summer to build on the work begun by volunteers. The MCC has installed and replaced trail markers, removed old barbed wire fence and cleared timber from the trails. They will join us again in October to put the finishing touches on several projects.

Of course you can find out how you can help and get all the latest news on our trail work at [pricklypearl.org](http://pricklypearl.org). Thanks again to all of our volunteers for showing up and helping build and maintain the best trail system in the West. And thanks to our partners, the City of Helena and the Helena National Forest, for their assistance.

## Completing the CDT in Montana

**THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE** follows the crown of the Rockies. Rain and snow that falls on the east side of the Continental Divide flows toward the Atlantic Ocean while precipitation falling on the west side flows to the Pacific Ocean. This is where east and west meet; where rivers arise; where you can still walk in the track of a grizzly or lose yourself in mountains without end.

High on the Divide there is a trail that stretches for 3,100 miles from Canada to Mexico, aptly named the

**CDT-Montana is building on five decades of grassroots volunteer work and successful collaborations in this area.**

Continental Divide Trail (CDT). The CDT links five states, 26 national forests, 20 wilderness areas, three national parks, eight BLM areas and one national monument along the spine of the Rockies. There's no question that the CDT showcases some of the most rugged and majestic mountain ranges in America.

Designated in 1978, the CDT is the youngest, longest and wildest of three well-known long distance trails including the Pacific Crest and Appalachian Trails. Unlike the AT and PCT, however, the CDT is not complete. As a whole, the completion status sits at roughly 78 percent and, when comparing all five CDT states (New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho and Montana), the northern section through the latter two states is

only 58 percent complete. But there are big dreams and strong efforts to improve upon these numbers.

In 1995, the Colorado-based Continental Divide Trail Alliance (CDTA) was formed to be the nonprofit partner to the CDT. But, sadly, CDTA was forced to close its doors in January 2012 as it was unable to meet financial obligations. The Montana Wilderness Association stepped in to pick up the slack on the CDT up north. After scrambling to pursue grants and funding, a summer project schedule was put in place with nearly a dozen volunteer opportunities from Glacier to Yellowstone National Park.

CDT-Montana is building on five decades of grassroots volunteer work and successful collaborations in this area. And, even better, there is a stronger local focus to help complete the least connected section of trail along the CDT. Long-time partners on the CDT, like the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation, Backcountry Horsemen of Montana and the Glacier National Park Fund, are still working closely with CDT Montana's efforts.

Meg Killen, CDT field coordinator, works primarily in the field with the volunteers. “It's a vote of confidence to see returning volunteers; people that I met via CDTA and now are a strong part of CDT Montana,” says Killen.

“It means we're doing something right and all the hard work to revive CDT efforts is very worth it.”

The CDT and our open spaces are for everyone, but they also require everyone to help care for and protect it. Despite struggling economic times, CDT Montana is a great example of stepping up to do your part. If you can't volunteer on the trail for a week, then please donate. These places are not just dirt paths, but special destinations that provide an escape, an adventure and a revival that cannot be found on a screen.

CDT Montana invites you to get outside. Do your part to take care of our special places. It doesn't have to be the Continental Divide Trail, either. Check out the volunteer opportunities at your local park, the native plant nursery in your town or the trail system in your community. And, even better, bring a young person to experience the “outside” and help them learn what it does for your mind, body and soul.

These places are for all of us. Please do your part to take care of them.

For more information about Montana Wilderness Association's CDT Montana trails program go to [www.cdtmontana.org](http://www.cdtmontana.org) or [www.facebook.com/cdtmontana](http://www.facebook.com/cdtmontana). CDT Montana Short Movie: <http://cdtmontana.org/pbs.html>

*The Continental Divide Trail in Montana and Idaho is just 58 percent complete. CDT-Montana projects are working to change that.*



John Lambing

### We thank our Harvest Moon business sponsors

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## Birdseye Beaver Pond Parcel Gets an "A" from School Groups

DO YOU REMEMBER PPLT's big project in the Birdseye area last year? It involved a 270-acre property owned by Dennis and Deb Milburn, who decided to place a conservation easement on 260 acres and donate the remaining 10 acres to PPLT. Less than a year later, we're happy to report that the Birdseye Beaver Pond Parcel is already being enjoyed by many people as PPLT works to donate it to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). This beautiful piece of land contains an amazing collection of wetlands and the eponymous beaver ponds, with Seven Mile Creek running through it, too.

Laurie Evarts, FWP education program manager, works hard to get area students into the outdoors, in part through FWP's new Montana Wild Education Center off Highway 12 here in Helena. She has also introduced several groups of high school students to the Birdseye Beaver Pond Parcel.

"This site offers an excellent educational opportunity for

students to perform macro-invertebrate collection and studies," she said. "Students have collected macro-invertebrates and compared their findings to collections from other local sites. The students are also able to observe the wetlands and take field notes on flora and fauna."

PPLT looks forward to seeing the parcel further improved through better parking access and the addition of a vault toilet if the transfer to FWP is successful. In the meantime, if you have a group you'd like to introduce to this special place, please call Andrea Silverman at 442-0490. We welcome the opportunity to share it with you.



Area students and other groups can take advantage of the learning opportunities available at the Birdseye Beaver Pond Parcel.

Laurie Evarts

## Helena Valley Heritage Initiative Update: Fencing Project Helps Creek Flourish

By Ron Marcoux, Conservation Director

AS PART OF PPLT'S new Helena Valley Heritage Initiative, I've been working on meeting landowners along Prickly Pear Creek. Earlier this spring, I stopped by a ranch upstream from Lake Helena operated by John and Tammy Novotny. After visiting with John about what PPLT was involved in, we had a great discussion about Prickly Pear Creek. John really appreciates the value of the stream to his operation and also for the wildlife that use the riparian areas.

John showed me a portion of the creek that he had fenced off to allow the vegetation to grow back, and it was impressive to see the cover along

those banks. He had recently acquired additional acreage downstream and talked about the desire to fence it as well because the banks were heavily eroded. I suggested that perhaps we could meet with staff from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), and PPL Montana to see if they could provide any funding assistance.

A few weeks later, Steve Leathe of PPL Montana, FWP Fisheries Biologist Eric Roberts, and stream restoration consultant Allen McNeal met with John Novotny and me to tour the property and discuss fencing about three-quarters of a mile on each side of Prickly Pear Creek. There

was tremendous enthusiasm for the project as it's located in a key area for spawning trout coming out of Lake Helena, has the potential to significantly reduce bank erosion, and fits with the Novotnys' goals for their ranch. Steve Leathe felt it would meet PPL's criteria to assist in stream restoration projects associated with their dams on the Missouri River. It also meets PPLT's goals of protecting riparian areas and working with agricultural folks in the Helena Valley.

In light of such significant benefits, PPLT partnered with the Novotnys to apply for a grant from PPL Montana to complete the fencing, with FWP

indicating strong support for the effort. We were recently notified that the request for funding was successful and work would be completed in late summer or early fall.

There are many ways that we can work together to enhance our stream corridors and create partnerships with the agricultural community that help maintain the treasured natural amenities of Montana. A big thank you to John and Tammy Novotny, PPL Montana, and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks for the support to get this project completed!

## Don't Fence Me In Shines Again

On Saturday, May 12, more than 600 people (and a whole lot of dogs!) hit the South Hills trails in PPLT's Don't Fence Me In trail run. It was the 12th anniversary of the race, on May 12, 2012. In honor of all those twelves, Blackfoot River Brewing donated a beer-a-month punch card (that's

12 beers) for every participant who got at least 12 sponsors and raised at least \$120. That must've been some incentive, because we had a record year in pledges, raising more than \$13,000. Thanks to everyone who secured pledges or pledged to a runner. Overall, the event raised more than \$26,000!

Thank you to the devoted Don't Fence Me In Committee and all the pre-race and race-day volunteers. The committee starts meeting in January to ensure a great event. And the 100 or so volunteers who stuff race packets, line the course, provide aid, and help with registration are essential to making the day such a success.

LaSportiva included the 30K race in their Mountain Cup Series again this year. Their incredible support has helped get the word out about the event in the endurance running community. This year several LaSportiva-sponsored runners participated, with Robert Krar of Flagstaff, Arizona, taking the men's race and Megan Kimmel of Silverton, Colorado, winning the women's event.

Mark your calendars now for the 13th Annual DFMI on May 11, 2013.



### Thank you to the following people who raised over \$100 in pledges:

Charlie Adams  
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And thank you to Aven Baker, Sarah Jaeger, and Robin Shropshire, who each raised over \$1,000!

A special thank you to all of our sponsors who helped make DFMI such a success!

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## Calendar of Events

### September 10

Trail Workday on Rodney Ridge

### September 13

Carroll College Hike

### September 22

Harvest Moon Banquet and Auction

Details are subject to change.

Please visit [pricklypearlt.org](http://pricklypearlt.org) for more information.

## The Cinnabar Challenge

You did it again! Thank you so very much to our members who contributed to the challenge put out by the Cinnabar Foundation to raise \$7,000. You came through with gusto, sending in more than \$10,600! With the Cinnabar Foundation's matching grant, the campaign raised almost \$18,000. We are truly grateful to you, our members, and also to the Cinnabar Foundation.

Founded in 1983, the Cinnabar Foundation is Montana's homegrown conservation fund. The Foundation supports organizations that are engaged in the preservation of open space and public access in Montana.

Since 1998, the Cinnabar Foundation has contributed \$85,000 to PPLT in the form of challenge grants to leverage both their investment and conservation outcomes achieved. Counting the dollars matched, \$170,000 have been generated for PPLT through the Cinnabar Foundation.

Earlier this year, the Cinnabar Foundation launched a new website showcasing Montana's collective conservation story. It features projects and personal accounts from landowners and conservationists that have helped Montana retain its splendor. See for yourself at [conservemontana.org](http://conservemontana.org).

Thanks again for responding so enthusiastically to our Cinnabar match drive. It is only with the support of members like you that PPLT is able to continue our work of expanding the trail system, providing new public access and protecting the rural character of Montana that we all love.

## Welcome New Members!

Prickly Pear Land Trust is happy to welcome these new members. Membership dues are the backbone of our ability to complete important projects. And with your help we will continue to save open space and develop recreational opportunities in our area. Thank you!

## Great Stuff!

Prickly Pear Land Trust has shirts, hats, visors, license plate frames and maps just for you. Please come visit our office at 46 N. Last Chance Gulch, just above the Creperie on the Walking Mall, and see all the cool logo wear we offer.

Our t-Shirts are 100 percent pre-shrunk organic cotton in navy blue with our logo on the front. Available in multiple sizes, and the price is just \$15.

Our caps and visors are a "must have" to protect you from the Big Sky sunshine. Caps are \$20 and visors are \$15.

License plate frames let everyone know that you love Prickly Pear Land Trust. What a bargain at just \$2!

We have reprints of the 2008 trail map in our office and around town at the outdoor and recreation shops. Just \$4 for this reprint. (New maps coming this winter!)

And if you need something to carry all your PPLT goods, we have tote bags for just \$5.

So come visit us when you're looking for that perfect and unique gift for your friends and family.



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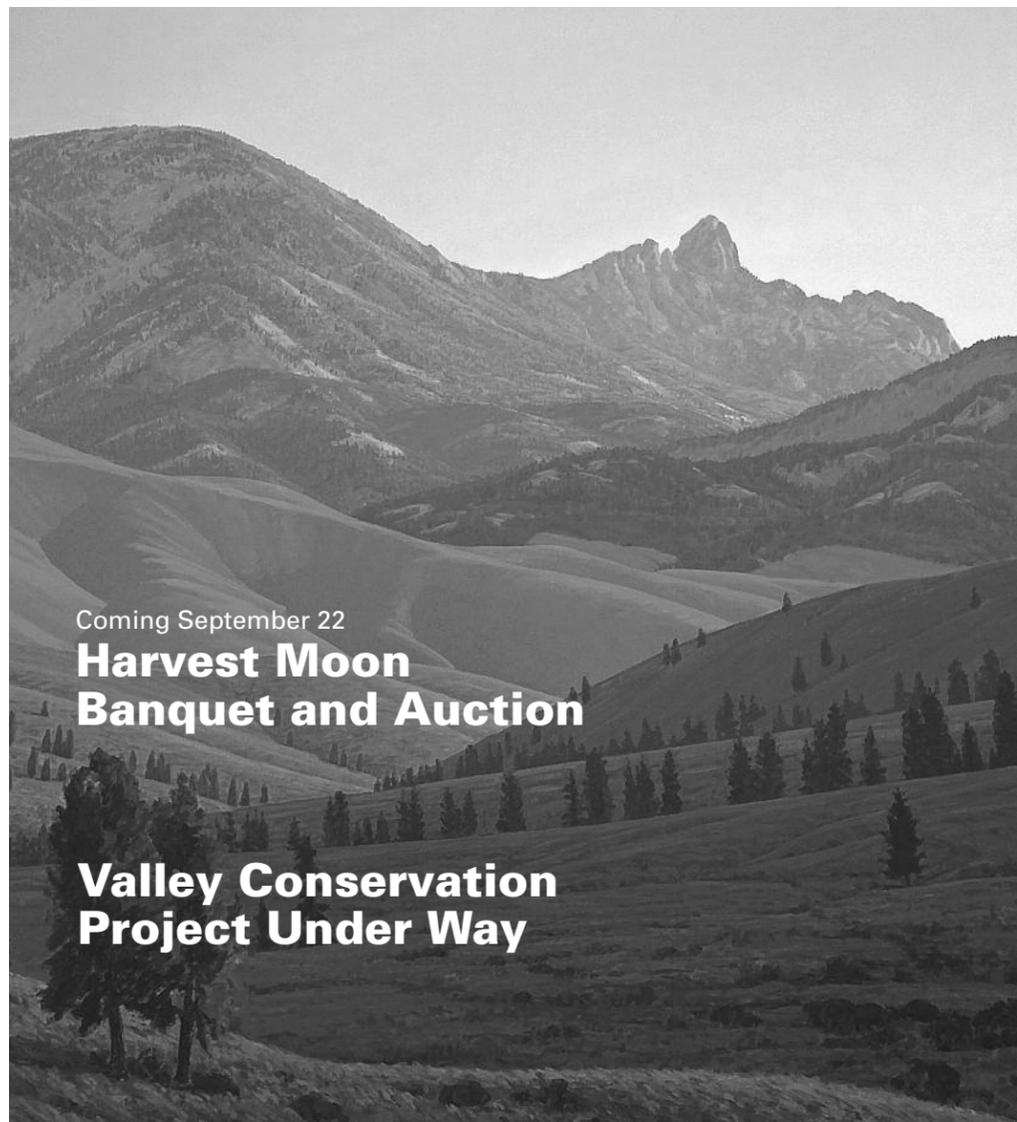


THE NEWSLETTER OF PRICKLY PEAR LAND TRUST

Connecting land and people

# openviews

SUMMER 2012



Coming September 22

## Harvest Moon Banquet and Auction

## Valley Conservation Project Under Way