Protect the natural diversity and rural character of the Prickly Pear Valley and surrounding lands in Lewis and Clark, Jefferson, Broadwater and Powell counties through voluntary and cooperative means. The land trust is dedicated to perpetuating the recreational, wildlife, scenic, agricultural and historic values of the land.

In support of our mission, the core values of Prickly Pear Land Trust define our organizational culture:

• Support the enhancement and restoration of conservation values of strategically identified lands.
• Protect and steward strategically identified open spaces in perpetuity.
• Provide easy trail access and open spaces that interconnect our community for all to enjoy.
• Provide information to the community on resource conservation and open space issues.
• Conduct and communicate our business with openness and integrity.
• Serve those in our community who have interests in open space and conservation.
• Instill a connection with the land that fosters its permanent protection.
Dear members, supporters and friends,

Thanks to you, Prickly Pear Land Trust made great strides last year. We recognize and celebrate the personal stake that each of you has in PPLT’s successes and challenges. Launching from a solid foundation of community collaboration, PPLT expanded its staffing to bring you increased recreational opportunities and high caliber events.

As a direct result of your support, PPLT has protected the backdrop of the Montana State Capitol, conserved a former subdivision in the Helena Valley for agriculture and public fishing access, created new public access near York, and advanced our role as Helena’s trail coordinator. This on-the-ground work expands your access to the amazing landscape that surrounds us, and preserves the rural character and scenic beauty that embodies Helena, Montana—an impact that you have helped to sustain. Thank you!

We have continued to build and maintain partnerships with agencies, businesses, organizations, and landowners. These relationships are critical for accomplishing our work, and we thank these partners for sharing the vision and mission. PPLT also proudly continues to serve as the fiscal and administrative sponsor of the Montana Association of Land Trusts, which provides strong leadership and representation for 12 local, state, and national conservation organizations operating on behalf of Montana’s communities and open lands.

Because of your support we are thriving—2014 was PPLT’s most successful year in terms of financial support. The bottom line is that none of this work happens without you and your commitment to a healthy environment and community. Your investment makes it possible for PPLT to continue working to protect what so many people cherish about this special part of Montana.

Please read on as we take stock of where we have been and set our sights on the future.

From the board and staff of PPLT, thank you for being part of the PPLT family.

With gratitude,

Andy Baur
Executive Director

Jonathan Krauss
Board President
2014 highlights

Whether born and raised here or lucky enough to have been drawn to Montana, our commonality is love for this landscape. Whether you work it as a farmer or rancher, hike or bike on it for recreation, or simply enjoy watching our area’s diverse wildlife, we all feel connected to the land.

Our work at Prickly Pear Land Trust helps conserve this open space we all love. From trail building and maintenance to public land protection to preserving working farms and ranches, we do what we do for the community, the economy, and future generations.

- PPLT acquired three additional parcels totaling about 100 acres as part of the Helena Backdrop Initiative. Since 2006, PPLT has facilitated the acquisition of 13 lots equaling 344 acres to protect the scenic backdrop, wildlife habitat, and trail access on Mount Ascension. Story on page 7.

- The York Gulch project increased in size to 386 acres with the addition of the 100-acre Tiddy property. This project added critical wildlife habitat to the surrounding Helena National Forest and provides important access for hunting, biking, and hiking. Story on page 8.

- The Trails Program again saw a record number of volunteers contribute to Helena’s world-class trail system. PPLT hosted 23 trail events with about 400 volunteers providing more than 2,000 hours of trail work. Thirteen of these events were sponsored by businesses and organizations. We thank our stalwart partners, the City of Helena and the Helena National Forest, for facilitating and fostering this work. Story on page 6.

- PPLT was thrilled to donate the Aspen Trails parcel along Prickly Pear Creek to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. It became the newest Fishing Access Site in the state this spring. Story on page 9.

PPLT’s Outreach and Education Committee had a busy summer hosting events that reached out to the young and young at heart. Their work spreads the word about how important land conservation is to our region, and seeks to increase PPLT’s base of support.

we do what we do for the community, the economy, and for future generations.
PPLT assisted in the acquisition of a wetland parcel to be added to the van Hook Wetlands near the fairgrounds and an abandoned railroad parcel that will connect Centennial Trail to Spring Meadow Lake State Park.

PPLT adopted a new comprehensive conservation plan highlighting critical targets for land protection within its four-county service area.

PPLT is proud to be in its ninth year as fiscal and administrative sponsor of the Montana Association of Land Trusts, which promotes and supports excellence in private voluntary land conservation in Montana through leadership, collaboration, education, and outreach.

The 14th annual Don’t Fence Me In Trail Run again broke records for participation and pledge raising! For the fourth time, the 30k race was included in the La Sportiva Mountain Cup Series, which brought some national caliber competitors to the South Hills Trail System, generating media coverage around the U.S. and Canada.

PPLT acquired a 6.5-acre parcel through a grant from the Montana Fish & Wildlife Conservation Trust that allowed the Waterline Trail to be extended an extra mile to the south. Users no longer have to travel on the busy road to connect between Rodney Ridge and Wakina Sky, and also now use a new access generously donated by adjacent landowners.

PPLT’s private land conservation program is actively working to protect thousands of acres of wildlife habitat, agricultural lands, and open space.
Skyline. Frame. Horizon. Ridge. Whatever you call it, Helena’s southern skyline provides one of the most beautiful backdrops of any city in the United States. It is also home to our beloved 72-mile trail system.

Mount Ascension is a big player in our backdrop; its trails provide unparalleled views of the Helena Valley, the Continental Divide, and surrounding mountain ranges. Prickly Pear Land Trust has been working since 2006 to protect access to Mount Ascension’s Entertainment Trail while reassembling a fractured landscape to be placed into public ownership. With the generous assistance of numerous partners, PPLT has been very successful in this ambitious project known as the “Backdrop Initiative.”

PPLT and the city worked with multiple partners to acquire 13 parcels in and around the Alpine Meadows Subdivision, situated on the south ridge of Mount Ascension. These lots are 20 to 58 acres in size; 10 have been conveyed to the city and are now part of the park. When this project is complete, Mount Ascension Natural Park will have increased in size by 88 percent.

When combined with other open lands and the adjoining Helena National Forest lands, Mount Ascension is critical to our acclaimed South Hills Trail System. Purchase of these parcels will complete PPLT’s efforts to preserve this trail corridor for hikers, mountain bikers, runners, snowshoers, birdwatchers, wildlife viewers, photographers, and botanists.

PPLT is a bridge between the city, the community, and the trail users.”
managing Helena’s world-class trails

Since 2001, Prickly Pear Land Trust has managed the City of Helena’s South Hills Trail System. As in previous years, scores of volunteers turned out in 2014 for our official trail workdays and several more impromptu sessions. Miles of trails were built, improved, or relocated.

The Diretissima Trail got a facelift as a new, more sustainable and enjoyable route is being established and older, less user-friendly routes are being retired. Look for this project to be completed in Spring 2015, including additional loop opportunities on Mount Helena’s far west side. With the help of Montana Conservation Corps crews, several miles and hundreds of pounds of derelict barbed wire fence—a hazard to wildlife and trail users—was removed from both Helena National Forest and City of Helena lands. PPLT hopes to continue this project next season.

Our most ambitious project was extending the famed Waterline Trail an extra mile south, where it now connects to the Barking Dog Trail. The new route allows hikers and bikers to travel safely away from a busy road. In addition, Bill and Marilyn Evans graciously allowed construction of a new access from the Waterline Trail to Wakina Sky Ridge Gulch, furthering better trail connections and loop opportunities.

Tim Ballweber descends the Rodney Ridge Trail.

“I treat my support of PPLT like a gym membership or a season ski pass.”
York Gulch is about two miles east of the community of York and less than 20 miles from Helena. This beautiful little valley has steep, timbered walls that lead up to Hedges Mountain, and the views just get better the higher you go. Working with Montana’s Outdoor Legacy Foundation, PPLT protected 386 acres of important wildlife habitat and recreational lands in the area and incorporated them into the surrounding Helena National Forest. With this acquisition, the public now has legal access to key public lands for hunting, hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, and other recreation.

This newest addition to the Helena National Forest consists of two former inholdings: the 286-acre parcel owned by the foundation, and 100 acres formerly owned by Mrs. Betty Tiddy, of Helena. The Tiddy property also provided key access to the foundation’s property and adjacent National Forest System land.

Betty Tiddy wanted to do something special for the people of Montana by selling the property to PPLT for conveyance to the Forest Service. Aside from wonderful recreational opportunities, the area functions as an important corridor for wildlife movement. Area residents and agency personnel have reported sightings of black bears, mule deer, elk, wild turkeys, mountain lions, bobcats, lynx, wolverines, pine martens, wolves, and even grizzly bears.

386 acres of important wildlife habitat and recreational lands in the area are now protected.

“...The York Gulch project was very important to the folks who live in this area. Many of us have been here for decades and appreciate the opportunities that living somewhere like York brings. We hunt, fish, hike, bike, and raise our families here. Our volunteer fire department is known for its York 38 Special mountain bike race every summer. When we were presented with the idea of making this parcel of land public, we were absolutely in support of it.

We appreciate the work Prickly Pear Land Trust did in fostering the partnerships and funding that brought the project to fruition for us and others who want to enjoy York’s special open spaces.”

—David Olson
Vice President, York Community Association
In December 2012, Prickly Pear Land Trust closed on a major conservation project that protects a significant piece of agricultural land in the Helena Valley while providing public access to Prickly Pear Creek, which flanks the property’s eastern edge.

In 2006, the Aspen Trails Ranch Subdivision had proposed 325 lots with 435 homes. When the parcel ended up under the ownership of Mountain West Bank, PPLT saw an opportunity to create a conservation project in the Helena Valley. A new vision for the 266-acre property maintains agricultural use and protects the riparian habitat of Prickly Pear Creek, while providing a new place for the community to enjoy fishing, birdwatching, or a picnic.

One of PPLT’s key objectives was to preserve agricultural use of the land, which led us to the neighboring landowner, Prickly Pear Simmental Ranch, founded by the Burnham family in 1864. In the 1960s, Don Burnham began building a Simmental breeding program that is now internationally known. His son, Gary, carries on this work today.

PPLT worked with Lewis & Clark County to secure funding through its County Open Space Bond to purchase a conservation easement on approximately 230 of the 266 acres of the property, which was sold to the Burnhams. On September 25, 2014, PPLT conveyed the remaining 36-acre creek parcel to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to become first public access to Prickly Pear Creek in the Helena Valley. This ensures protection of 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 habitat values.

The 36-acre creek parcel will become first public access to Prickly Pear Creek in the Helena Valley.
PPLT’s strategic plan is a “living” document used by staff and board as they define PPLT’s growth and map out the years ahead. In the fall of 2013, PPLT board and staff updated the three-year strategic plan, setting the following programmatic and organizational goals that guided our work in 2014:

- Permanently protect critical lands in Prickly Pear Land Trust’s service area.
- Maintain the conservation and scenic values of protected lands.
- Engage the public in private conservation and the mission of the land trust.
- Identify and implement public recreation projects.
- Grow the capacity of the land trust.

What does the future hold?

PPLT has big plans for 2015 and beyond, with on-the-ground trails and conservation projects that will help shape our community.

We’ll continue to work with our partners to expand the South Hills Trail System, making connections to the Brooklyn Bridge area, into the Helena Valley, and beyond. PPLT is working hard to bring improved recreational access to those in the nearby communities of York, Montana City, Clancy, and East Helena. We will also continue to ensure that the trails are built, maintained, and enhanced for the long haul.

We’ll watch as Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks facilitates the first public fishing access on Prickly Pear Creek, as part of the Aspen Trails project we completed last year.

And we will begin the visioning and planning process for the Prickly Pear Creek Greenway, which one day will create a continuous open space and trail corridor from Montana City through East Helena and into the Helena Valley. This important project aims to create safe new transportation routes, provide new family-friendly recreational access, and preserve the rural character of our region.

PPLT will continue to help farmers and ranchers keep their land in traditional uses. New conservation easement projects are currently underway in the Canyon Creek and Augusta areas. These cooperative projects create real benefits to local agriculture, the economy, and the environment, now and for future generations.
## Financial Summary

### Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total assets</td>
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<td>Liabilities</td>
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<td>Net assets</td>
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<td>Unrestricted net assets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investments</td>
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### Revenue

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<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dues and contributions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donated conservation land</td>
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<td>Fundraising events</td>
<td>$203,685</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sales and program fees</td>
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<td>Investments and other</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenues</strong></td>
<td>$1,613,712</td>
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### Expenses

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<th>Description</th>
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<td>Trails and conservation programs</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
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<td>Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td>$1,570,695</td>
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### Notes

Prickly Pear Land Trust is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization under 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code.

This financial information is drawn from audited financial statements by the accounting firm Rudd & Co.

PPLT will continue to help farmers and ranchers keep their land in traditional uses.
Big thanks go to the organizations and partners we worked with on land protection projects in 2014:

Gary Burnham and Prickly Pear
Simmelran Mountain
West Bank
Cliff Hubert
Ries and Associates
Kim Colvin of Terra Western Associates
Garrett Fawaz and the Pat Barnes
Chapter of Montana Trout Unlimited
Eric Roberts, Fish Biologist for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Timm Moore, Appraisals, Inc.
Montana Association of Land Trusts
Travelers for Open Land

2014 grantees

The Cinnabar Foundation
Land Trust Alliance
Montana Fish & Wildlife Conservation Trust
Recreational Trails Program of Montana State Parks
Missouri River Resource Advisory Committee
The Ash Grove Charitable Foundation
The Turner Foundation
Heart of the Rockies Initiative
The Treacy Foundation
The Helena Outdoor Club
Montana Association of Land Trusts

2014 partners

Jimmy McCabe
City of Helena
Lewis and Clark County Commissioners
Lewistown and Clark County Open Space Bond
Citizens’ Advisory Committee
Montana Fish & Wildlife Conservation Trust
Montana Conservation Corps
Tom Brooks of Brooke Appraisals
Westech Environmental Services, Inc.
John and Tanya Novak
Steve Leathe and PPL Montana
Bob Morgan and family
Morisson Mairie, Inc.
Pam Attardo of the Lewis and Clark
Historic Preservation Commission
Robert Ingalls
Montana Open Legacy Foundation
Jeanne Holmgren and Bob Dennee,
East Side Sands Zone, U.S. Forest Service
Elizabeth Tiddy
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Mule Deer Foundation
Wildland Conservation Committee
Dawn and Brian Theriault
Montana City Trails and Trust
Helena Abstract & Title Company
First Montana Title Company
Montana Department of Transportation
U.S. Forest Service
Heart of the Rockies Initiative
Community Forest Program
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks Recreational Trails Program
Land and Water Conservation Fund
Matthew and Maureen Quinn
Richard and Naomi Jones
Solstice Spirit, Inc.
Kathleen Reich and Jeanne Jorgenson
BW Hill, Inc.

Special thanks to all of our conservation easement landowners.

2014 donors

$25,000 and above
Anonymous
Montana Outdoor
Legacy Foundation
Heart of the Rockies

$10,000 – $24,999
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Montana
Narrate Church
Anonymous
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The Turner Foundation
Ron & Mignon Waterman

$5,000 – $9,999
Cinnabar Foundation
The Speyer Family Foundation
Betty Tiddy

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John & Luanne Smith
St. Peter’s Hospital
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Leah & John Tietz
Timothy Ballweber Orthodontics
Jim & Cindy Utterback
Kim Wilson

Those with * have given in honor or memory of someone

New Members

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McCullough
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Bob & Gen Morgan
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Clare & John O’Connell
Jade Ogle
Tom Pedersen
John Rundquist
Alice & Ed Santos
Beth & Brandon
Sheafor
Department of Parks Recreational Trails Program
Land and Water Conservation Fund
Matthew and Maureen Quinn
Richard and Naomi Jones
Solstice Spirit, Inc.
Kathleen Reich and Jeanne Jorgenson
BW Hill, Inc.

Special thanks to all of our conservation easement landowners.
“Through our travels we have come to appreciate just how fortunate we are to call Helena our home. We access to public open space is a result of PPL’s tireless work on our behalf. We can think of no greater bequest to future generations than to ensure the ongoing stewardship of these lands. That’s why we have included PPL in our estate planning and encourage you to do the same.”

—Mary Ellen Holverson and Matthew Coon

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Lea & Julia Sweeney
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Mark & Todd Vanier
Sara & Thomas Varner
Brian & Victoria Vaught
David & Linda Vawdin
Leslie & Buzz Walton
Lee & Judy Ward
Nancy Weed
Heidi Wein
Bill & Nancy Wells

13

“preserving the open space in Montana matters to me. I want my kids and my grandkids to have the pleasure of roaming this amazing country right in their back yard.”

—Mary Barry

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Debra Schauf & Ron Floyd
Gill & Jodi Schellinger
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Jaime Schlepp
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Julie Schutz
Sarah Scott
Karen & Fletcher Mulvaney
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Jaye Anderson
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Mary Arnold
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Jodi Bard
Zoe Barnard & Tim Pool

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“open space allows our modern-day souls to be renewed and enriched.”
-Dennis & Deborah Milburn

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List includes auction item purchases.
PPLT staff, board, and members work together to connect land and people.

Our membership is the backbone of our success and we’re grateful.

As a member, you’ll receive our newsletter three times a year, as well as special notices about our projects and successes. But most important, you’ll receive the priceless benefit of knowing you can help protect the rural character of Helena and surrounding communities.

Please use the attached envelope or visit www.pricklypearl.org to make your membership contribution today.

thank you!

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The Montana Association of Land Trusts

Prickly Pear Land Trust is proud to be the fiscal sponsor of the Montana Association of Land Trusts (MALT). Created in 2005, MALT is a group of 12 separate nonprofit land trust organizations working on private land conservation and voluntary conservation agreements throughout Montana. MALT, headquartered at PPLT’s offices in Helena, helps to coordinate association membership to achieve legislative, administrative, communications, and policy goals.

Glenn Marx, Executive Director

“my well-being is directly related to the outdoors, our spectacular landscape, and the trails and conservation easements that make those things accessible. PPLT’s work matters very much to me.”

— Russ Cargo, New Member
On the cover: Sunrise from Bompart Hill photo by Kevin Hudson

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