



openviews

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

Peaks to Creeks

Working alongside a number of community partners, PPLT welcomed the New Year by kicking off our largest project yet: the Peaks to Creeks Initiative.

In February, PPLT acquired two parcels consisting of a total of 558 acres; one located along the banks of Tenmile Creek and the other on Sevenmile Creek. Prior to this, public access in the urban boundary to our waterways did not exist, but thanks to this acquisition, almost two miles of creek frontage will be made available and accessible to all.

PPLT plans to establish more than two miles of ADA accessible trail on the Tenmile property and provide connections to the soon-to-be-completed extension of the Centennial Trail; Fort Harrison and the VA Hospital; Spring Meadow Lake State Park; Montana WILD; and Spring Meadow Resources, a non-profit serving those with developmental disabilities.

Jim Bissett, Executive Director of Spring Meadow Resources said, “Spring Meadow Resources is thrilled to see this development in our neighborhood, bringing better connectivity and new trails that will have benefits to all, including the disabilities community. Being able to access and cross the creek to PPLT’s new property, or over to Spring Meadow Lake State Park, will open many wonderful and new outdoor experiences for our residents.”

This ADA accessible trail will provide both recreational opportunities to the Helena community and serve as a bike commuter route for more than 700 employees working at the VA Hospital and Fort Harrison. In addition, work on the 350 acre Sevenmile parcel will include not only trail construction, but stream and grassland restoration as well to bring the property back to a more natural, healthy state.

PPLT could not have started this project without the partnership of Fort Harrison and funding through the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB)

“Prickly Pear Land Trust looks for projects that bring the community and conservation together, and this project has brought together so many diverse interests in one place.”

–Executive Director Mary Hollow

program. ACUB funding is used by the military to preserve nearby open space and habitat while limiting incompatible development in the vicinity of military installations. Major General Matthew Quinn of Fort Harrison indicated that if the military had directly acquired it, public access would not be allowed, so Prickly Pear’s involvement meets

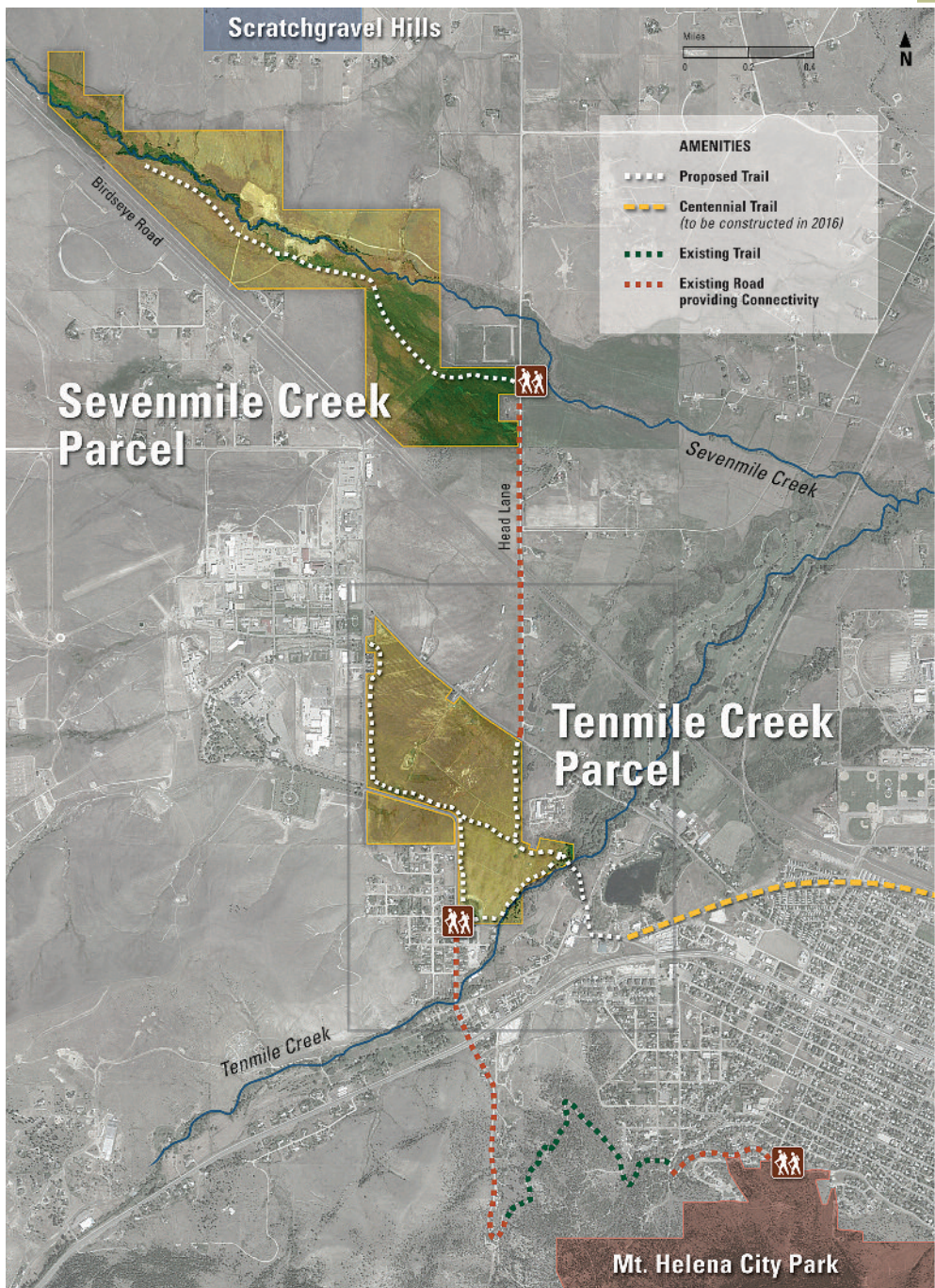
the dual goals of both protecting habitat and providing public access while still allowing for military training.

“Having that buffer protects our training areas. We do a lot of small arms

training, and we were a little nervous that dense homes wouldn’t be compatible with our uses,” said Maj. Gen. Matthew Quinn, the Adjutant General for Montana.

An often overlooked aspect of this project is the potential to provide educational opportunities to local students and educators. Its proximity to Montana WILD and its direct access to both Tenmile and Sevenmile Creeks make it an ideal space to bring in local students who are exploring aspects of the natural world in their classes. Capital High School science teacher Thomas Pedersen, who also serves as a board member for the Montana Conservation Corps and who is active in the Forest For Every Classroom program, had this to say about PPLT’s recent acquisitions: “We need to connect this generation to the outdoors not only in our national parks and forests, but also in our connections to our cities; safe, inexpensive places where our kids can hike, ride their bikes and explore after school or on the weekends. The ‘Peaks to Creeks’ acquisitions along Tenmile and Sevenmile creeks give that opportunity to all of our children.”

“This project has literally something for everyone,” says PPLT Executive



The Peaks to Creeks Initiative features “something for everyone” including open space, stream access, restoration, connectivity, and recreation opportunities for the entire community.

Director Mary Hollow. “Prickly Pear Land Trust looks for projects that bring the community and conservation together, and this project has brought together so many diverse interests in one place.”

Ultimately, PPLT seeks to improve the quality of life in the communities we serve through our conservation efforts. In this case, the conservation benefits for the water resources, open space, and stream and habitat restoration opportunities are important, but the Peaks to Creeks Initiative truly shines in the connections it creates and bolsters within our community. It takes

a special project to bring a state park, an outdoor education center, military agencies, veterans and disabilities groups, bike commuters, and outdoor recreationists together in one area, and here in Helena we are lucky to have just such a special project taking place in our backyard. In fact, this initiative has such a diverse set of partners and stakeholder values that the Land Trust Alliance has hailed it as one of the top community-based conservation projects in the western United States.

Stay tuned as this exciting project continues to take shape in the coming months!

Join Us Saturday, May 7 16th Annual Don’t Fence Me In

It’s a race, a fundraiser, and an all-around fabulous event to kick off the Helena community’s trail season! Don’t Fence Me In is in its 16th year, and we couldn’t be more excited about what our small town fundraising race has grown to be. Please join Prickly Pear Land Trust on Saturday, May 7 for your choice of a 30k, 12k, or 5k race, or for the 5k non-competitive dog walk through the beautiful South Hills of Helena.

The DFMI 30k is once again included in the La Sportiva Mountain Cup Series and, new this year, the Trail Runner Trophy Series. Being a part of these two national running series truly elevates the recognition of our race and the Helena trail system. Plus, the La Sportiva Mountain Cup comes with some pretty phenomenal cash prizes for regional qualifier races (like DMFI!) this year. Last year, DFMI brought runners from all over the region to

compete in the 30k race, and we’re only expecting numbers to increase this year!

Don’t Fence Me In is only as successful as its community support allows it to be. Lucky for PPLT, we have an outstanding community filled to the brim with people and businesses that love the trails and believe in the



See the list of generous sponsors on page 2.

conservation work. We extend our deepest thanks and gratitude to everyone who comes out to the race each year, who raises pledges to help support us, and to the businesses that so generously sponsor our efforts.

Registration

Register by visiting pricklypearlt.org and call 406-442-0490 with questions. Be sure to register early for lower

continued on page 2

It’s Trail Season!

SPRING HAS SPRUNG and we’re beyond excited that this year’s trail season is underway! The trails are already filled with many happy faces, and we’re looking forward to a great summer season of trail building, maintenance, and outdoor fun. Check out the following for updates on your favorite recreation spots.

Boy Scout Projects

Currently PPLT has two Boy Scout projects that have been proposed as Eagle Scout projects. One project by Daniel Leas (Troop 214) involves a reroute of the lower section of the Pinchot Trail. Since the trail will be used in the Don’t Fence Me In 30K run event, the reroute will not be flagged until after the May 7 event.

Another project by Mark Mousel (also Troop 214) will be a new trail on PPLT’s recently acquired Tenmile Creek parcel. We will meet with the affected parties to discuss sustainability, demonstrate trail construction techniques, and conduct flagging of proposed alignments. We look forward to working with these Scouts and to the contributions of the projects to the overall trail system.

PPLT trail workdays

PPLT trail workdays have been set for 2016 and will be held on the following days: April 25, May 23, June 20, July 18, August 15, and September 19. Specific projects have not yet been identified for each monthly workday (evenings at 5:30), but

will be available on our website as soon as practical, posted at trailheads in the vicinity, noticed in the Eviews, and posted on PPLT’s Facebook page. Trail workdays are a wonderful opportunity to play your part in maintaining our much-loved trails and to give back to the community. The only things you need to bring are a sturdy pair of shoes, plenty of water, and energy!

Trail conditions & access

By the time this newsletter is printed, most all trails will be dry and usable, though any recent rain and/or snow may affect the condition of the trails. All trail users should be aware of any muddy sections; we are most concerned about trail damage and widening by users. PPLT

wants to thank the users that stayed off the trails during the early spring thaw we saw. We also want to thank our Adopt-A-Trail volunteers that report downed trees, weed infestations, sign status, or other issues affecting the existing trails. Please remember, some of our beloved trails in the South Hills do cross private land, so being respectful and staying on trail is of the utmost importance. PPLT is always working to ensure that the public continues to have access to those areas, but it takes the work of the community to build an environment of respectful trail use to facilitate this access. We extend a huge thanks to all of the conscientious trail users out there. We appreciate you doing your part.

Montana to Celebrate Open Land Month in July

In 2015, the Montana Association of Land Trusts proposed a simple concept: Recognize July as Montana Open Land Month and celebrate and share the value of open land’s contributions to our economy, landscape and Montana way of life. Governor Bullock officially recognized July 2015 as Open Land Month, and has done so again in 2016 through a letter to MALT in which he wrote: *I commend the Montana Association of Land Trusts for their tireless devotion to private land conservation in the Big Sky State. I encourage Montanans to acknowledge July 2016 as “Montana Open Land Month” and to take in the fresh air and scenic views that Montanans and the Montana Association of Land Trusts work so hard to conserve. These efforts truly do make Montana the Last Best Place.* Indeed, open land does make Montana the Last Best Place. And this open land is

definitely worth celebrating. Land trusts will be leading a broad coalition in celebrating the 40th anniversary of Montana’s first conservation easement, created in 1976 in the Blackfoot Valley. Land trusts will partner with outdoor recreationists, conservationists, our tourism industry, agriculture community, outdoor recreation industry and many other allies in saluting the vast benefits open land contributes to our economy, wildlife populations, scenic enjoyment, agriculture industry, outdoor recreation, wood products industry, quality of life and so much more. We want to unite Montanans in appreciation of open land, heighten awareness for the economic value of open land, tell new stories to new audiences in new ways, and to encourage Montanans to share their own personal perspectives and photos about their connections to open land.

What kind of celebrating is Montana Open Land Month going to do? Take a look at the Open Land Month website at openlandmt.org/ for details, but we’re celebrating with short Montana open land videos, open land events and activities across the state, a gallery of outdoor photos, fun social media messaging, joint promotions with outdoor concerts and learning programs, and much, much more. We’re also producing a film—thanks to a grant from the Montana Department of Commerce—that showcases the tremendous importance of open land to Montana and the heroic achievements of people who have made Montana a national private land conservation leader. Trailers of the film will be released during Open Land Month and the film will be

premiered in Helena (and elsewhere) in autumn. Follow all our actions on Facebook at www.facebook.com/OpenLandMT/, on Twitter at [@montanamalt](https://twitter.com/montanamalt) and [@openlandmt](https://twitter.com/openlandmt), and on Instagram at [mntmalt](https://www.instagram.com/mntmalt) and [openlandmt](https://www.instagram.com/openlandmt). And please join in. Visit the website for regular updates and new events, follow and “Like” the impressive photos and current news on social media, and let us know what you think. We’ll give you plenty to think about and enjoy. 2016 marks the 40th anniversary of Montana’s first conservation easement and the 20th anniversary of Prickly Pear Land Trust. Those anniversaries deserve celebrations. —Glenn Marx, Montana Association of Land Trusts



DFMI, continued

prices, and remember that there is no race day registration for the 30k! Pre-registration for all races ends at midnight on Wednesday, May 4.

Collecting Pledges for PPLT

Don’t forget: as part of the fundraising side of DFMI, PPLT asks our runners to raise pledges for the trails they love. To give a little incentive, we’ve got some stellar pledge prizes this year including beer cards at Blackfoot River Brewing Co., cone cards from Big Dipper Ice Cream, softshell PPLT jackets and the GRAND PRIZE of a one night stay for six people, including gourmet dinner and breakfast, at the beautiful North Fork Crossing Lodge on the Blackfoot River. Details about pledge-raising are available on our website, pricklypearlt.org. Thank you for going the extra mile for PPLT!

To receive your pledge reward, pledges must be collected and turned into PPLT by race day. If you have pledges other than those made on your online fundraising page, please download a

pledge form from the PPLT website and be sure to collect the names and addresses of your pledgers so that we can thank them and send them a donation acknowledgement letter.

Other DFMI Events

Back by popular demand is the Don’t Fence Me In Open Space Fair! Bring the family to Pioneer Park starting at 10:30 a.m. for live music, food vendors, kid-friendly activities, and interactive booths from local businesses and organizations. It’s a wonderful opportunity to hang out in the fresh air, wrap up your trail race, or cheer on the runners if you aren’t racing this year. After the Open Space Fair, don’t miss the after-party at the Blackfoot! CWG Architects and Blackfoot River Brewing Co. have generously teamed up once again to form a Community Partnership that supports Don’t Fence Me In. Scoot over to the taproom ‘round 12:30 for live music, door prizes, and a taste of the “E-Trail” beer, brewed by CWG, The Blackfoot, and PPLT specifically for this event.

DON’T FENCE ME IN SCHEDULE	
6:30 a.m.	30k packet pickup begins
7:30 a.m.	30k run begins
8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.	Packet pick-up and late registration for 12k, 5k, and 5k dog walk
10:00 a.m.	12k run and walk begins
10:30 a.m.	5k run and walk begins
10:30 a.m.	Open Space Fair begins
10:45 a.m.	5k dog walk begins
12:00 p.m.	Awards ceremony
12:30 p.m.	DFMI after-party at the Blackfoot

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Bike Helena

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Volunteerism: supporting PPLT with the gift of time

WE’VE SAID IT BEFORE and we’ll say it again, volunteers are truly at the heart of this organization. Whether donating time for Don’t Fence Me In and Harvest Moon, serving on numerous committees or the Board of Directors, helping out around the office, showing up with energy and zeal on warm summer nights to help build and maintain the South Hills Trail System, or simply spreading the word about the work that PPLT is doing to positively impact our community, volunteers keep us moving forward, and we are beyond grateful for their support.

In the last year, PPLT has had the good fortune of receiving the time of two high school students who take their community service extra seriously and who have graciously chosen PPLT as an organization worthy of their time. **Aine Lawlor** and **Emma Beaver**, a junior and sophomore at Helena High School respectively, each reached out to Prickly Pear to ask, “How can I help?” And help they did. Whether they are volunteering at Harvest Moon, participating in community outreach activities, or devoting time after school to office work, Aine and Emma always show



Volunteers Aine Lawlor, left, and Emma Beaver love the South Hills trails and have a broader passion for conservation.

up with a ready-to-work attitude and a demeanor beyond their years.

When asked why she chose to get involved with PPLT, Aine stated, “I have been so fortunate to quite literally have the trails and the mountains directly out my back door and as a result I have a deep appreciation for the work Prickly Pear has done to make this a possibility. I understand that this is something special to Helena and I want to ensure we don’t take this resource for granted, so I volunteer and try to do my small part. I got involved because I believed in this mission but I have continued to help because I found such a great community within the Prickly Pear people.”

Both Emma and Aine have been influenced by growing up in the Helena community and say that spending their

childhood here has shaped their love for the outdoors. Both girls love to hike, bike, ski and generally do any sort of outdoor recreation. When asked about her hometown, Aine says that “the opportunities that Helena offers have set the bar high for any of my future communities.” And lo and behold, when asked about their favorite outdoor place around the area, both pick spots in the South Hills. Aine prefers Mt. Ascension and Emma prefers the top of the quarry or the “Top of the World.” She says that she loves both of these places “because you can see the expanse of Helena and feel the wind all around you.”

Though it’s certainly true that both girls love the trails, they also have a

broader passion for conservation. In fact, one of Emma’s favorite quotes comes from the Dr. Seuss classic, The Lorax: “I am the Lorax, I speak for the trees.” Emma claims, “Land conservation is very important to me, because our world needs it. As towns

and cities are growing we need places with trees and grass, where people can get fresh air. We need someone to “speak for the trees,” we need a Lorax.”

Both Aine and Emma will be headed off to big and bright futures in the coming years, with high goals and aspirations to match their vast capabilities. PPLT is proud to have such driven and community-minded young women as part of our organization. Thank you Aine and Emma. You are truly making a difference!

“In all things of nature there is something of the marvelous.”

–Aristotle

Board News

Thank you, Jonathan!

He’s been our fearless Board of Directors leader for the last three years, the emcee for Harvest Moon and Don’t Fence Me In, and a general beacon of positivity and support for Prickly Pear Land Trust since he started as a volunteer. We are incredibly grateful to Jonathan Krauss for serving his term as President of the Board and are perhaps even more grateful that he will continue to grace us with his presence on the PPLT Board.

Born in southeast Pennsylvania, Jonathan developed an early love of the land on the family farm. After law school in Oregon, Jonathan practiced local government law in the mountain towns of Telluride and Steamboat Springs. He is currently employed as an Assistant



Attorney General for the Montana Department of Justice, handling criminal appeals on behalf of the people of the state of Montana.

Jonathan and his wife, Helenan-by-way-of-Seattle Ann Mary Norton, have lived in Helena since 2004. Jonathan was an active PPLT volunteer for a number of years before his appointment to the Board in 2009. After a brief (but very slow) trail running career, Jonathan continues to bike and hike on the South Hills trails, and also enjoys getting “out there” during hunting and nordic skiing seasons.

Thank you, Jonathan! PPLT has truly flourished under your leadership.

A New PPLT President – Welcome, Jim!

Jim Utterback relocated to Montana from Texas after a successful career in public accounting to become a new car auto dealer. The beautiful landscape of the Big Sky country and the opportunities for fly fishing and bird hunting were the motivating factors in that decision. Jim and his wife, Cindy, have made Helena their home for twenty-five years. They live



within a stone’s throw of the South Hills trail system promoted and maintained by PPLT. They enjoy the trails almost daily with their two Labrador Retrievers. Jim is an active member of the Helena community and has served on many boards, including serving as president of the Helena Chamber of Commerce, trustee of the Montana Historical Society, director of St. Peter’s Hospital, Crimestoppers, and Trout Unlimited. Prickly Pear is excited to welcome Jim as our new Board President! We’re confident that he’ll continue his hard work from his years on the Board into his new leadership position.

PPLT’s Newest Board Member, Ed Santos

Ed Santos was born and raised in Connecticut, but came to Montana with his wife Alice in 1994. He immediately fell in love with the mountains and lakes of Helena and made it his permanent home in 1995. Ed’s conservation background goes back to his youth, and as a young adult he was very involved with the Student Conservation Association and was a member of Rails to Trails. He owned Aspen Consulting & Testing, an environmental consulting firm,

for 16 years, and although he recently sold the business, he still works for the company. Air quality testing has taken Ed all over the state and the Northwest and has given him a great appreciation for the outdoor recreation in Helena. He and his wife have been involved with Prickly Pear Land Trust for over 14 years. Several years ago, Ed took to mountain biking and has become passionate about the sport ever since. He is incredibly grateful for the beautiful and plentiful trails in Helena and the surrounding areas, and is thankful that his wife and kids (Pilar and Eva) often join him in the outdoors on the weekends. Ed is excited to be on the board* of such a progressive and successful organization and to contribute to the upcoming projects in any way he can.



**Ed has been appointed by the Board of Directors to serve through this year, but formal election by the PPLT membership will take place at the annual meeting next February.*

Trail Rider Updates

Bike Helena is excited to announce an extended season of the Trail Rider shuttle this year!

Mountain bikers, trail runners and hikers can begin to gear up for the upcoming shuttle season that begins May 12. There are some exciting updates as the program enters its 14th season. This will be the first year the Helena Tourism Alliance/ Bike Helena will be leading the program in partnership with the Helena Area Transit Service (HATS).

The Trail Rider program, with FREE shuttles available five days a week, helps Helena maintain its position as a leader

in mountain biking destinations and is one of the reasons that Helena was awarded the honor of a Silver Level Ride Center from IMBA (International Mountain Biking Association). Using the Trail Rider to shuttle trail users also helps disburse people throughout our extensive trail system.

This year, the Helena Tourism Alliance/Bike Helena has invested in a new trailer that will provide easier and faster loading and unloading of bikes, as

well as better protection of the bikes while in transit. They are also planning the expanded season of the Trail Rider shuttle to run into mid-October—that is nine more weeks to help get you to the Mount Helena Ridge Trail and MacDonald Pass! A new weekday morning shuttle is in the works as well to help you get out on the trails for a run, bike ride or hike before work and the summer weather heats up.



Do you love to use the Trail Rider to get you out on the Mount Helena Ridge Trail or up on MacDonald Pass? This year, in addition to business sponsorships of the shuttle, you can sign up as an individual sponsor. For \$50 you will receive a Bike Helena growler and two pint glasses, and \$25 of your donation will go back to support PPLT and our maintenance of the trail system. Visit www.helenamt.com/TrailRider to sign up as an individual sponsor and watch Bike Helena’s and PPLT’s Facebook pages and E-newsletters for the release of the updated season schedule.

Calendar of Events

April 25: Trail Work Night, 5:30 p.m., Meeting place TBD

April 26: Ales for Charity Night, 5 p.m. – 8 p.m., Lewis & Clark Brewery

May 7: Don't Fence Me In Trail Run and Open Space Fair, Pioneer Park

May 13: Ales for Trails, Pioneer Park

May 23: Trail Work Night, 5:30 p.m., Meeting place TBD

May 26: Wildflower Walk, 7 p.m., Mt. Helena trailhead parking lot.

June 20: Trail Work Night, 5:30 p.m., Meeting place TBD

June 23: Weed Pull & BBQ, 5:30 p.m., Meeting place TBD

July 12: Kids' Hike, 6 p.m., Meeting place TBD

July 18: Trail Work Night, 5:30 p.m., Meeting place TBD

August 15: Trail Work Night, 5:30 p.m., Meeting place TBD

September 19: Trail Work Night, 5:30 p.m., Meeting place TBD

September 24: Harvest Moon Auction and Banquet, Helena Civic Center

Details are subject to change. Visit www.pricklypearlt.org for more information.

The Centennial Trail

The Friends of Centennial Trail (FOCT) steering committee, under the capable leadership of Bruce Newell, met last month to discuss accomplishments and next steps. One of the needs identified is the update of the existing trail plan that is over ten years old; it should acknowledge improvements that have occurred and include revised costs for future construction. Of particular concern are the crossings of high volume traffic on Henderson, Benton, and North Montana Avenues.

PPLT also met with FOCT on extensions of the trail to the west (to Fort Harrison) and to the east. The City is creating a maintenance strategy for the existing and additional trail segments within its jurisdiction. A consultant is in the process of developing a wayfinding system that may also involve Centennial Park and the Centennial Trail. The Ales for Trails fundraiser will occur on Friday, May 13 at Pioneer Park; come thirsty and show your support for a good cause in our community!

Welcome New Members!

We thank you for joining us. Membership dues play a vital role in helping PPLT sustain and further our mission.

Your dues will help us preserve the rural character of our area and ensure that open, working lands, wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities are expanded and protected for generations to come.

Thank you to our newest members since October 9, 2015 for supporting Prickly Pear Land Trust. We're so glad you share our vision of protecting open space and improving access to public lands.

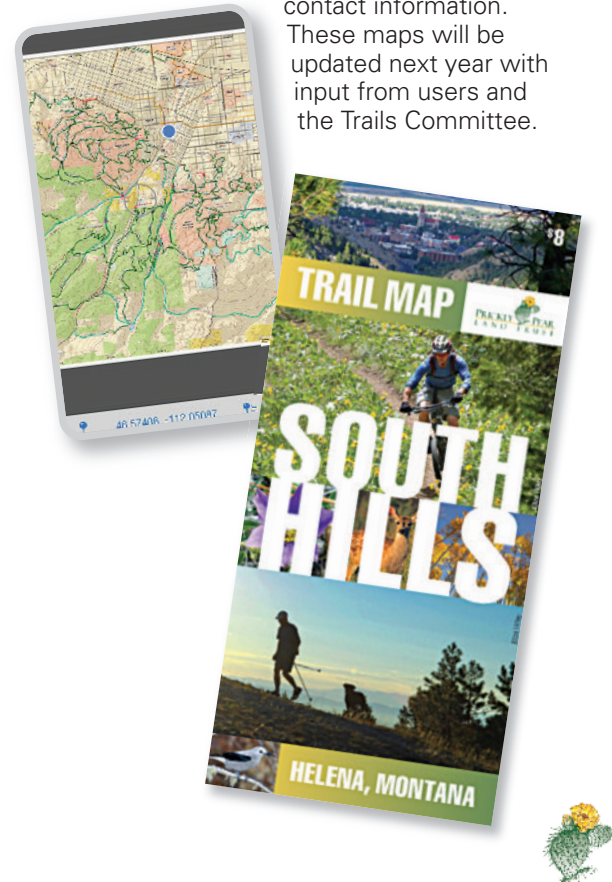
We warmly welcome:

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Mark Bruno
Steve & Lisa Bullock
John Burbidge & Claire O'Connell
Mitch Carroll
Natasha Cook
Donald Cornish
Allison Dale-Riddle
Carl Deitchman & Bob Morgan
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Paul Roos
Mark and Andrea Scherting
Ann Schwend
Sally Staley
Jim & Colleen Stone
Brian Wacker
Elizabeth Walton
Derek & Marci Williams

Avenza & Print Maps

PPLT wants to remind everyone that maps of the South Hills trail system are available in multiple locations, both digitally and in hard copy. Through the Avenza PDF Maps app, one can download the digital version to a capable device for \$3.99. Its features include GPS tracks, measuring distances, and the ability to add placemarks and plot photos to map locations.

Weatherproof print maps are also available at local outdoor stores and at PPLT for \$8. They include the text on the reverse side of the map that includes area trail descriptions, flowers, weeds, and contact information. These maps will be updated next year with input from users and the Trails Committee.



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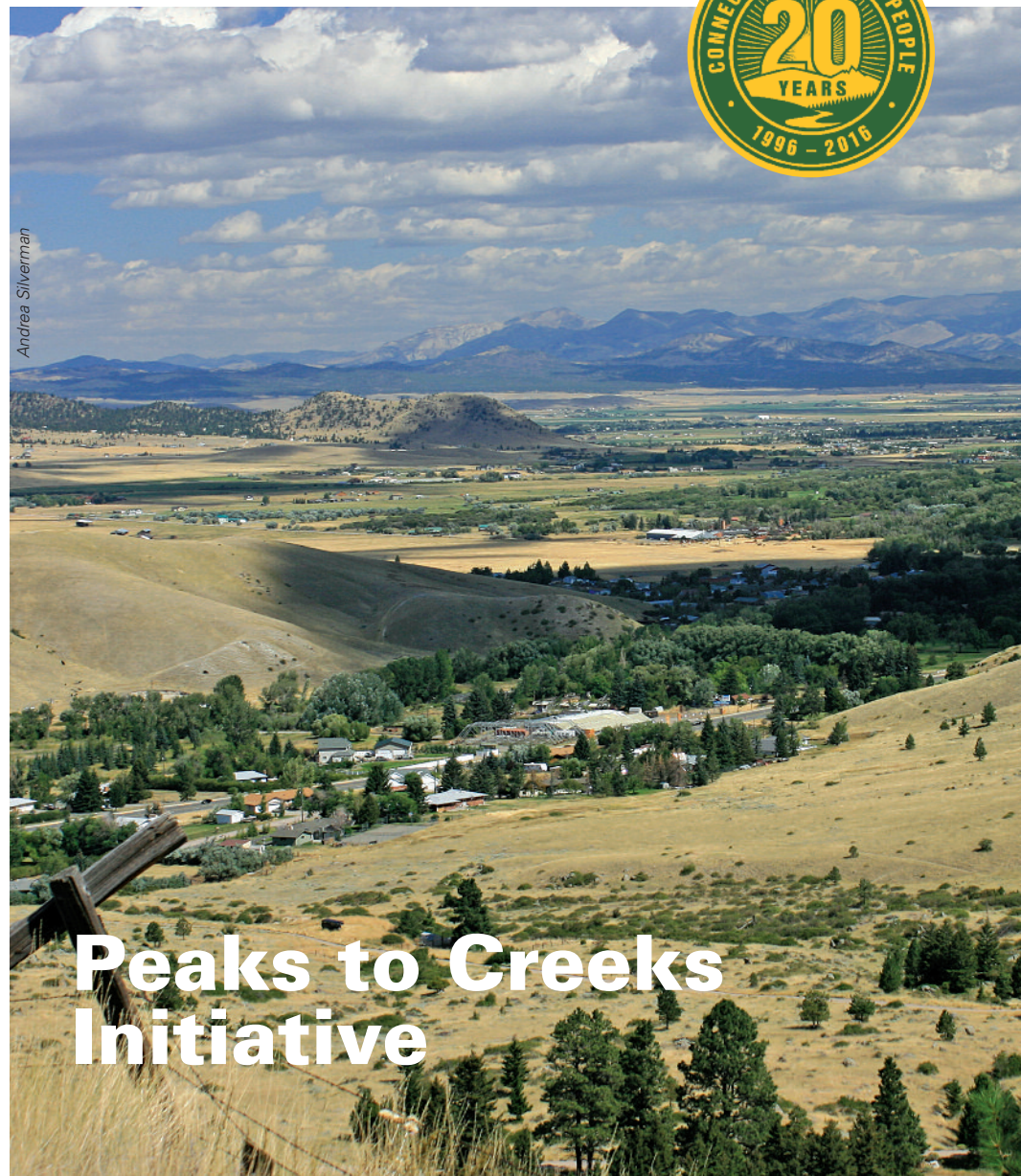


THE NEWSLETTER OF PRICKLY PEAR LAND TRUST

Connecting land and people

openviews

SPRING 2016



Peaks to Creeks Initiative