



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.

Harvest Moon Coming September 24

Come one, come all! Helena’s favorite event is just around the corner.

Tickets are now available for the 2016 Harvest Moon Banquet and Auction, which will be held on September 24 at the Helena Civic Center. This year’s theme follows suit with the anniversary that PPLT is currently celebrating: “Prickly Pear Land Trust, 20 years and rising.”

Join us for a delectable dinner, superb live and silent auction items, musical entertainment and an evening filled with some of Helena’s most generous community members all coming together for open space and recreation.

Every penny spent goes directly to projects like the Peaks to Creeks Initiative, new trails in the South Hills, and the Prickly Pear Creek Greenway project.

Tickets are \$75 and can be purchased on the PPLT website, pricklypearlt.org, or by calling the office at 406-442-0490.

Tickets include dinner served by Chili O’Brien’s, wine on your table and delicious bread and desserts donated by local bakeries. Tickets are going quickly, and last year the event sold out three weeks in advance. Be sure to make your reservations early!

Harvest Moon is PPLT’s most important fundraiser and largest celebration of the year. Thanks to our sponsors and auction donations,

guests can be assured that every penny spent during the evening goes directly to bringing projects like the Peaks to Creeks Initiative, new trails in the South Hills, and the Prickly Pear Creek Greenway project one step closer to completion.

Keep an eye on our Facebook page and website for updates on the event and auction item highlights. We can’t wait to see you on September 24!

See the list of generous sponsors on page 2.



Harvest Moon 2016 Schedule

- 5:00 p.m.** Doors open; cocktail hour and silent auction
- 6:30 p.m.** Dinner is served
- 7:00 p.m.** Silent auction closes
- 8:00 p.m.** Silent auction winners are posted and live auction begins
- 9:00 p.m.** Raffle drawing

Menu Options:

Meat Entree: Grilled Tri Tip Steak with Roasted Red Pepper and Portabella Mushroom Cognac Sauce
Vegetable Entree: Italian Roasted Vegetable Lasagna.

Peaks to Creeks Update

PRICKLY PEAR LAND TRUST is very excited about the progress being made on our Peaks to Creeks project. New trails, weed abatement and stream restoration are just a few of the projects underway. And, we were pleased to learn that the Peaks to Creeks project was recognized by the Land Trust Alliance as one of the best examples of Community Conservation in the nation.

Here is a brief update on the work we’re doing on the two parcels:

Tenmile Creek parcel

As early as September, three miles of trail will be accessible to hikers and bikers, with two of those miles meeting ADA standards. Once safety signs are in place along Williams Street and Country Club Avenue, folks from Fort Harrison and the VA will be able to safely access the area. Currently,

anyone interested in accessing the Tenmile parcel can park outside the gate on Williams Street and walk in. By early fall, a parking lot will be completed allowing easier access. In addition to the trails, we are working on engineering and construction of a bridge that will cross the creek.

Sevenmile Creek parcel

To create connectivity for the health of the fishery on Sevenmile, we are working on a stream restoration project. We should have a design plan in hand by September of this year. The plan could potentially include rerouting the stream and the creation of a wetland area.

Currently, Sevenmile Creek is the source of one of the biggest sediment issues in the Tenmile Creek watershed. Another goal of the restoration project is to address those concerns.

PPLT has been working with renowned geomorphologist Karin Boyd of Applied Geomorphology, and watershed and stream restoration specialist Mike Sanctuary of Confluence.

We’ve also taken a weed inventory and are beginning to implement a weed abatement plan. PPLT project manager Nate Kopp released more

than 7,000 weed-eating insects on the Sevenmile and Tenmile properties this summer.

PPLT is working with the VA on a formal public access agreement to the Sevenmile property. We are hoping that recreational opportunities will be available by 2018, after the necessary restoration work is complete.

We’ve had the pleasure of working with several local groups—including Montana Conservation Corps, the Boy Scouts and employees from Deloitte—on weeds, fencing removal and other projects.

The Peaks to Creeks project was recognized by the Land Trust Alliance as one of the best examples of Community Conservation in the nation.

Community Conservation Offers Something for Everyone

FOR MOST OF US, it's easy to stand on top of Mount Helena, take in the view and feel privileged that we have such a great trail system.

But what if you couldn't? What if you had a disability that limited your movement? What if you simply had never been offered the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors?

That is the idea behind community conservation, a relatively new phrase in conversations about conservation.

"We use it to describe a deeper level of engagement with the community that broadens the scope of the benefits and the benefactors," said PPLT Executive Director Mary Hollow.

To better understand the concept of community conservation, look at PPLT's Peaks to Creeks project. Once the work on the two parcels is complete, it will provide access to the outdoors to people who may not have not had such an opportunity before—disabled vets, clients of Spring Meadow Resources, patients at the VA hospital. It will also provide

outdoor education opportunities conveniently located close to our community.

In fact, Peaks to Creeks is such a good example of community conservation that the Land Trust Alliance recently

recognized it as one of the best examples in the nation.

"We all know in our hearts—and now science is proving—that being out in nature is good for our mental and physical health," said Rob Aldrich, director of community

conservation for the Land Trust Alliance, which is based in Washington, D.C.

"Prickly Pear is seeing to it that soldiers, veterans, people with disabilities, students and others directly benefit from the work of the land trust.

Connecting more people to the land and to each other. That's community conservation."

While PPLT has a broad membership and a world class public land estate like no other, the organization recognized the opportunity to do even more for the community.

Per capita, Montana has one of highest rate of recruitment into armed services and one of the highest rate of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Access to water and the outdoors has measured higher success rates of dealing with PTSD than pharmaceuticals. This project will allow those vets the critical access they need to the outdoors.

And it has given PPLT the confidence to pursue more community conservation opportunities, including the Prickly Pear Creek Greenway, which will provide trail access and outdoor opportunities for East Helena.

"We know as an organization, we can do it," Hollow said. "We have a working model to make it happen. We've tried and tested a variety of projects. We did them. We did them all successfully. We will continue to do what we do but take advantage of new opportunities."

A priority for PPLT is to get more people out in nature, regardless of socio-economic level.

"We need people to care," Hollow said. "Community conservation is about bettering health, happiness and quality of life for everyone. It's an exciting direction."

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Summer 2016 Trail Activities

Prickly Pear Land Trust has had a busy summer, thanks to all of the volunteers who helped make the trail building and maintenance possible.

New Official South Hills Trails

- Improved and adopted the 'No Trail' – provides a (slightly) less steep alternative to Powerline Trail
- Improved and adopted the Bull Run Trail – east side neighborhood trail between Saddle Drive and South California Street

- Improved and adopted the Andy's Trail (named in honor of former PPLT executive director Andy Baur) – northwest addition near the Old Chevy Trail
- Improved and adopted the South Oakes Trail (between South Oakes Street and Virginia Dale)

Other Improvements to trail system

- Lower part of Pinchot Trail rerouted to improve trail grade and sustainability
- Signing, litter collection, drainage work, alignment scoping, tree clearing, et al

- Lower Deford Trail cleaned of trash and debris left over from tree clearing projects
- Waterline Trail widened just north of Arrastra Gulch
- Barking Dog Trail widened near Oro Fino Gulch
- Powerline Trail drains cleaned and improved
- Powerline Trail planting and revegetation
- Mt. Helena Kiosk painted and new map installed
- Invasive weeds pulled on north side of Meatloaf Hill
- Show Me the Horse Trail drainage and sustainability improved
- Lower part of Wakina Sky Trail rerouted for safety and private property
- Pursuing a connector route on Brooklyn Bridge Trail at the far south end of the trail system

Coming Soon

- Updated trailhead kiosk language and maps
- New Beattie St. trailhead kiosk

Thank You to our Partners

- Montana Conservation Corps (National Trails Day – Powerline/Waterline improvements, two weeks of hired crews – 'No Trail', general tree clearing, Andy's Trail, fence removal)
- Eagle Scout project (Tenmile trails) Mark Mousel of Troop 214
- Eagle Scout project (Pinchot reroute) Daniel Leas of Troop 214
- Deloitte Consulting (weed pull on Sevenmile)
- Helena Middle School (Deford cleanup)
- World Montana (Bull Run Trail)
- PPLT Trail Work Night volunteers (kiosk painting, tree planting, trail widening, etc.)
- Montana Bicycle Guild (Show Me the Horse improvements and maintenance)
- Carroll College Service Day (Hunthausen Center) (South Oakes trail)
- Carroll College Community Advisors (Hunthausen Center) (Bull Run Trail)

A mountain biker enjoys a ride through arrowleaf balsamroot.

How did Mount Helena end up with a trail called Road to Mars?

The trail, which is on the northwest side of the park, is an old road bed on the east side of a gully. It provides a north-south connection on city property between the Ambrose Trail and the Diretissima Trail (these trail names will be a subject in future newsletters).

Emmett Purcell was mountain biking one evening in the area years ago; upon looking up at a steep grade, he

The Lore of the South Hills

noted stars (or planets) in his field of view. This may have given him the inspiration to be the first to accomplish the climb on a mountain bike.

Road to Mars was applied to the existing section of trail, though not the specific route that Emmett was on (the original section was on a steep road that has since been reclaimed).

So when you are on the Road to Mars Trail, be sure to think of Emmett's first ascent!



Another Successful Don't Fence Me In

See the list of generous sponsors on page 4.

NATIONAL TOP TRAIL RUNNER

Jim Walmsley returned to the trails that started his racing career, winning the Don't Fence Me In 30K with a time of 2:08:18. Walmsley's first trail run was the 12K in the 2013 DFMI; in 2014, he returned to win the 30K.

In addition, Helena's local star athletes and folks out to casually stroll and run the trails came together to make the 16th annual Don't Fence Me In Trail Run another smashing success. Sunshine, smiles and wagging tails were abundant, and celebrations at the after-party that Blackfoot River Brewing Company and CWG Architects hosted lasted into the evening. Thanks to the Helena community and visitors from near and far, PPLT saw more racers than ever before and broke the previous

Thanks to the Helena community and visitors from near and far, DFMI saw more racers than ever before and broke the fundraising record.

fundraising record. More than 800 people registered and participants raised over \$10,000 in pledges alone.

Don't Fence Me In has been an important part of PPLT's fundraising efforts for the past 16 years, but moreover, a pillar in Helena's community events. It is an opportunity to showcase our beloved trail system, get new people and kids on the trails and show the importance of having opportunities to recreate and enjoy connecting to nature at our backdoor.

We certainly could not make this race happen without the widespread support of volunteers, race participants and sponsors — thank you!

We hope you'll join us for the 2017 DFMI on Saturday, May 13!



Janice Miller

Some of the more than 800 participants ascend the Eagle Scout Trail.

New Easement Protects Habitat, Provides Access

IT'S BEEN SEVERAL YEARS of hard work, but in June Prickly Pear Land Trust finalized a conservation easement on 125 acres of ranch land in York.

The property, which was previously owned by Marty Welch and his family, had been in the Welch family for generations. By placing an easement on the property, the Welches were able to sell the ranch knowing that they were contributing to the open space that makes the Helena area such a beautiful place to live.

In turn, the buyers of the property—Tia Nelson and Derek Brown—were able to purchase the largest piece of private land in the Trout Creek valley north of York at a more affordable price. Not only does their new home have spectacular views, but it includes about 1.5 miles of Trout Creek, which winds its way through extensive beaver ponds on the property.

Nelson and Brown realize what a special place they now own and they don't want to keep it all to themselves. The new easement not only protects important habitat for elk, deer, black bears, mountain lions, beavers, bobcats, rainbow and brown trout, several species of bats, and many species of birds, including bald eagles, golden eagles, and osprey, it also includes a public access component. On the southern edge of the property a two-car parking lot and a pass-through fence will be constructed, allowing access to folks who want to fish, hike, bird-watch, photograph nature or simply enjoy the peace and quiet. Because of livestock on the property, dogs, hunting, and shooting will not be allowed. For more information about accessing the property, please contact the PPLT office.



Andrea Silverman

Public access will allow folks to fish, hike, bird-watch, photograph nature or simply enjoy the peace and quiet.



Peggy O'Neill joins PPLT staff

In May, PPLT welcomed Peggy O'Neill as our new Communications and Events Coordinator. Peggy worked for several years at the Independent Record as outdoors editor, features editor and city editor. She was also a staff writer at Montana Magazine. Most recently, Peggy worked in communications at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Montana.

Peggy is excited to be a part of the staff at PPLT. "The work that PPLT has done in this community has made it such a fantastic place to live and raise a family. I can't wait to be a part of PPLT's new projects, which will ensure that future generations in this area will have an even greater opportunity to enjoy trails and open space."

Peggy loves almost all outdoor activities – except running – she especially loves mountain biking, hiking, fly fishing, skiing and spending time with her son, Dylan, and husband, Mike.

A visit with Aven Baker, champion DFMI pledge-getter



PPLT recently sat down with Aven Baker for advice. The seven-year-old second-grader is an expert at raising money. For the second year in a row, Aven was the top pledge-getter for the Don't Fence Me In trail run, raising more than \$2,000 for PPLT and earning herself a spiffy pink PPLT sweatshirt in recognition of her achievement.

Here is a rundown of her pledge-getting advice (all answers are in her very own words):

PPLT: Aven, what is your strategy for raising so much money?
Aven: I think just being a kid, people want to give me money.
PPLT: What would you like PPLT to do with the money you raised?
Aven: I want them to pay for more trails and green space.
PPLT: What do you like about trails and green space?
Aven: I just like being outside in the fresh air.
PPLT: Why do you like to raise money for PPLT?
Aven: It's my favorite thing to raise money for.
PPLT: What would you tell other people about raising money for PPLT?
Aven: If you want to raise money, why don't you just use your kid to raise money?
PPLT: Any final words?
Aven: I challenge all kids to beat me next year.
PPLT: Will you be sad if someone raises more money than you next year?
Aven: No! It doesn't matter who raises it; it just matters that someone raises it.

New Location!

PPLT is excited to announce that we’ve moved into a new space that is more accessible to the public. Connecting with our community is important to us, and our new location will make it easier. Please swing by to say hello and check out Helena’s new conservation location, 40 W. Lawrence St., Ste. A.

Annual Report Available Soon

Please keep an eye out for PPLT’s 2015 annual report — it will be released in the coming weeks. This is an opportunity to share our successes with those who help make them possible. To conserve paper and resources, the annual report will primarily be published online this year, but don’t be shy about requesting a hard copy if that’s what you prefer. The report highlights 2015’s projects, funding and land trust members.

Trail Rider Season Still in Full Swing

Don’t forget about Helena’s shuttle service offered by Bike Helena. Hikers, trail runners and mountain bikers are all welcome to utilize this free service to access various trail locations in the South Hills and on MacDonald Pass. It is a fantastic opportunity to explore trails further away from downtown and, new this year, the Trail Rider will run into October! Local sponsors make this service possible, so please be sure to thank those whose logos you see on the shuttle.



Updated Digital South Hills Trail Map

Download the updated South Hills trail map from Avenza Maps for only \$1.99! If you already have it just re-download the updated version at no additional cost. Update includes all new trail additions and reroutes over the past two years.

PPLT Welcomes 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 open space through conservation easements, develop trails along the creek corridors in the Helena Valley while preserving and restoring these natural areas, and allow us to enhance and maintain the world-class trail system in the South Hills.

Thank you to our newest members, who joined between April 1 and July 31, 2016, for supporting Prickly Pear Land Trust. We’re so glad you share our vision of protecting working lands and improving access to public lands.

We warmly welcome:
Kent Barnes & Kathleen Dolezal
Rick & Gretchen Edelen
Bill & Marilyn Evans
Alvaro Freyre
Fred Kopp
Kenny Kyler
Aaron Millis
Perk Perkins
Simon Perkins & Elisabeth Van Woert
Paul Porte
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PRICKLY PEAR LAND TRUST

40 W. Lawrence St., Ste. A
PO Box 892, Helena MT 59624
Phone: 406-442-0490
Fax: 406-442-1790
www.pricklypearlt.org



40 W. Lawrence St., Ste. A
PO Box 892
Helena, MT 59624

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THE NEWSLETTER OF PRICKLY PEAR LAND TRUST

Connecting land and people



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SUMMER 2016



Coming September 24
Harvest Moon Banquet and Auction

