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 entertainment and 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.

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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

Vegetable Lasagna.
Vegetable Entree: Portabella Mushroom Cognac Sauce with Roasted Red Pepper and 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, the evening goes directly to PPLT for the 2016 Harvest Moon event.

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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 bikers and hikers, with two of those miles meeting ADA standards. Once safety signs are in place along Williams Street and Country Club Avenue, folks from Port 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 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 Karen 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 parcel. 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 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.”

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 Andy’s Trail (named in honor of former PPLT executive director Andy Bair) – 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

• Improved and adopted the Andy’s Trail
• Waterline Trail widened just north of Ararra 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 (Temeni trails) Mark Minouf of Troop 214
• Eagle Scout project (Pinchot reroute) Daniel Leas of Troop 214
• Delouitte Consulting (weed pull on Seventeen)
• Helena Middle School (Deford cleanup)
• World Montana (Bail 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) (Bail Run Trail)

A mountain biker enjoys a ride through arrowleaf balsamroot.
Another Successful Don’t Fence Me In

NATIONAL TOP TRAIL RUNNER
Jim Walmsey returned to the trails that started his racing career, winning the Don’t Fence Me In 30K with a time of 2:08:18. Walmsey’s first trail run was the 12K in the 2013 DFM1; 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 16th annual Don’t Fence Me In Trail Run saw more racers than ever before and broke the previous 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 DFM1 on Saturday, May 13!
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 Kylar Aaron Mills Perk Perkins Simon Perkins & Elisabeth Van Woert Paul Ponte Tom Schneider Craig and C.M. Stiles

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