



# openviews

**Our mission** is to inspire connections to the landscapes, water, wildlife, recreation and agricultural heritage of west-central Montana through conservation, now and for future generations.



Eliza Wiley

May 13 is an important day. Sure, it’s the birthday of Stevie Wonder, but it’s also the 17th annual Don’t Fence Me In Trail Run.

As usual, there are the 30k, 12k, 5k and 5k dog walk — all taking place on Helena’s fabulous South Hills trails system.

The runs/walk begin and end at Pioneer-Heritage Park (aka Anchor Park) located at the south end of the Downtown Helena Walking Mall, next to the Lewis & Clark County Library.

Overall male and female winners in each distance will win a \$100 gift card from Altra; second place finishers will win a \$50 Altra gift card; and third-place finishers will win Altra schwag. First place male and female finishers in each age group in each event will also be awarded a prize. The dog walk is noncompetitive.

But don’t feel like you need to be a fast runner to be a winner! Fabulous prizes are also available for motivated

**If you haven’t already, please register at [pricklypearlt.org](http://pricklypearlt.org).**

pledge getters — set up your own pledge page on CrowdRise.com (search for “Don’t Fence Me In”). The person who raises the most pledges will win a one-night stay for six people at the North Fork Crossing Lodge on the

beautiful Blackfoot River. Enjoy a gourmet dinner and breakfast and the ultimate “glamping experience”

alongside your stay in one of the most pristine and treasured areas of Montana! If you raise \$500 in pledges, you’ll receive a PPLT logoed performance sweatshirt – perfect for spring and summer! The first person to reach \$500 in pledges will win free lodging and dinner at a Montana destination. If you raise at least \$100 in pledges, you will receive a PPLT logoed trucker hat.

For more information about Don’t Fence Me In, please visit [pricklypearlt.org](http://pricklypearlt.org) or call the PPLT office at 406-442-0490.

**Prizes for motivated pledge getters include a Happy Trails trucker hat.**

## 2017 DON’T FENCE ME IN SCHEDULE

- 6:30 a.m.** 30k packet pickup begins (PLEASE NOTE: THERE IS NO RACE-DAY REGISTRATION FOR THE 30k)
- 7:30 a.m.** 30k run begins
- 8 – 9:30 a.m.** Packet pick-up and late registration for 12k, 5k, and 5k dog walk
- 10 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 noon** Awards ceremony
- 12:30 p.m.** DFMI after-party at the Blackfoot, co-sponsored by CWG Architects, Blackfoot River Brewing and PPLT and featuring Don’t Fence Me In’s signature beer, E-Trail pale ale



Eliza Wiley



**Dave Leitheiser and Christina Lipetzky round a switchback on the 12k course during the 2016 Don’t Fence Me In.**





Eric Ian

# Preserving land, preserving history

ON DECEMBER 20, 2016, Prickly Pear Land Trust completed its largest private land conservation easement to date with the closing transactions on the Gehring Ranch easement.

“The great wildlife habitat and water resources combined with its tremendous historical significance made it a great project for PPLT,” said Mary Hollow, PPLT executive director.

The 3,000-acre ranch, which is about 10 miles northwest of Helena on Lincoln Road, is one of the few historic ranches in the area that remains intact and has been in the Gehring family for more than 150 years. Bill Gehring, the current

owner, secured the future of the ranch with the conservation easement.

“My ancestors did a great job with this ranch, and I did an OK job with it, but we have no idea what future generations will do,” Gehring said. “But no matter

**“No matter what direction somebody else takes the ranch, it will always be preserved.”**

– Bill Gehring

what direction somebody else takes the ranch, it will always be preserved.”

In addition to funding provided by the Lewis & Clark County Open

Space Bond and grants from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Travelers for Open Lands, Gehring donated \$1.2 million of the ranch’s appraised value by agreeing to forego \$1.2 million in payment to make the project happen.

## PPLT at the Capitol

PPLT HAD TWO OPPORTUNITIES to visit with Gov. Steve Bullock and Montana legislators during the 2017 session.

On Jan. 30, PPLT Executive Director Mary Hollow led more than 1,000 voices at the Rally for Public Lands. As emcee for the boisterous event, Mary introduced several speakers who voiced their support of keeping public lands in public hands, including mountaineer Conrad Anker, Trout TV host Hilary Hutcheson and Simms CEO K.C. Walsh. Mary noted PPLT’s role in expanding and securing the public lands that ensconce Helena’s and the capitol backdrop.

Gov. Bullock rallied the crowd, which filled the rotunda and several balcony floors, with a passionate speech. “It’s time we send a message ... that proposals to transfer our public lands or study the transfer of public lands have no place in this building and no place in Montana,” Bullock said. “This ain’t about politics, whether you’re Democrat, Republican, Libertarian or vegetarian, these lands belong to you.”

March 29 marked Land Trust Day at the Capitol. Representatives from nine Montana land trusts, including PPLT, participated in the event.

Rep. Denise Hayman of Bozeman welcomed the land trust community. “I view land trusts as unsung heroes,” Hayman said.

Gov. Bullock and Lt. Gov. Mike Cooney also met with the land trust representatives and posed for photos. More than 250 legislators and staff joined the land trusts for a lunch that was organized and served by PPLT staff and board members.

**PPLT’s Andrea Silverman, Lanie White, and Nate Kopp with Gov. Steve Bullock and Lt. Gov. Mike Cooney**



Thom Bridge, Independent Record

On January 30, PPLT Executive Director Mary Hollow led more than 1,000 voices at the Rally for Public Lands.

## Annual Meeting and Film Premier Draw Crowd to Myrna Loy

THANKS TO EVERYONE who came to our annual meeting and to the film premiere of “On the Shoulders of Giants: The Story of Montana Private Land Conservation,” on Feb. 22. We had a great turnout, with more than 50 people attending the meeting and 165 at the film.

During the annual meeting, members voted to reinstate the three board members who were up for re-election: Jim Utterback, Dawn North and Chris Hunter. Members also approved an amendment to Article IV of the PPLT Articles of Incorporation as follows:

*“Members. The corporation shall not have members as that term is defined in Title 35, Chapter 2 of the Montana Code Annotated. The corporation may designate individuals as members who shall have rights as defined by the Board of Directors.”*

PPLT partnered with The Nature Conservancy of Montana and The Montana Land Reliance for the Helena premiere of “On the Shoulders of Giants.” Following the film, Scott and Tyrrell Hibbard gave an excellent talk about their experiences passing down an operating family ranch with deep conservation roots to the next generation.

*“I commonly hear how lucky we are to live here in Montana for its unique character, its beauty, the wealth and accessibility of its natural resources; and Helena for all of that plus our trail system and that access. But I submit another narrative, that the wealth of landscape, space, environment, access, and outdoor recreation that we all enjoy aren’t a product of luck, but of the ethic of stewardship and conservation, the foresight of the generations before us and the work of Montanans today.”*

– Tyrrell Hibbard



Peggy O'Neill

A standing-room-only crowd filled the Myrna Loy auditorium for the film premier on February 22

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Van’s Thriftway



# Peaks to Creeks Update

## Tenmile Creek Park to Open Soon

A FORGOTTEN FIELD will spring to life this summer as Tenmile Creek Park opens to the public.

In April, a bridge spanning Tenmile Creek will be installed, thanks to our partners Dick Anderson Construction, Spring Meadow Resources and Stahly Engineering. The bridge will be a community connector bringing together all the neighbors and stakeholders involved with the project.

“The ADA size and gradient design for the benefit of better accessibility on the bridge and associated trails opens up a whole new recreational opportunity for residents at Spring Meadow Resources and veterans in the long-term treatment unit at the VA, as well as all Fort Harrison staff and visitors,” said Prickly Pear Land Trust Executive Director Mary Hollow.

In addition to the bridge, a parking lot and vault restroom will be installed in the coming months and, barring unforeseen circumstances, the trails will be completed by mid-May.

“The pressure is on,” said Nate Kopp, PPLT project associate. “I’m excited. It will be great to not be the only person walking the ground out there. I’m also excited to see the first biker in his or her uniform on their way to work at the VA.”

A leadership team of the Land Trust Alliance, a national organization that represents more than 1,000 land trusts, will visit the project in May, as it exemplifies diverse benefits and key ingredients for community conservation, helping conservation be accessible for future generations and more diverse communities.

PPLT is waiting on final word from Montana State Parks about a Recreational Trails Program grant that will cover some of the costs of the Tenmile Creek Park projects.

Be sure to include a visit to the park this summer to check this great example of community conservation.

Also, plan to join PPLT on National Trails Day, June 3, for a trail workday and barbecue at Spring Meadow Resources to build their ADA trail.

“The mental image for me—kids, people fishing on the creek, strollers, wheelchairs, service members, all sharing the space—is a cool one,” Hollow said.



*The bridge, which will span Tenmile Creek, will be installed in April.*

*Gardenwerks created this digital rendering of the concept design for Tenmile Creek Park.*

## Sevenmile Creek Restoration Project to Begin

PPLT IS WADING IN to some exciting new waters with its restoration project on a section of Sevenmile Creek. The creek flows through one of the Peaks to Creeks parcels west of Helena. The 358-acre Sevenmile parcel features more than two miles of stream access.

This will be the first time PPLT has undertaken a water restoration project on a primary tributary of Tenmile Creek, which is the source of Helena’s drinking water. Sevenmile Creek

**We are restoring an entire stream/riparian corridor to its former function and glory.**

currently contributes quite a bit of sediment overload to Tenmile. The restoration project will be handled in four phases, with each phase focused on a particular reach of the stream. PPLT recently contracted with McNeal Resources to restore one of the more challenging reaches, which includes a fish passage issue. “Sevenmile Creek has been seriously abused for many years,” said PPLT board member and fisheries biologist

Chris Hunter. “Channel straightening, riparian vegetation removal and even topsoil removal have left the stream seriously degraded. But it also provides PPLT with a wonderful opportunity to restore this stream. When we move the stream back up onto its former elevation, we can restore all the stream functions. The fish habitat and riparian vegetation restoration will benefit wildlife. In a few years it will look and function as it should.”

In addition to stream work, the Sevenmile project will include noxious

weed abatement and a multitude of vegetation treatments associated with restoration. “This project is another whole new area for PPLT,” Hunter said. “We are not just preserving open space and developing trails, we are restoring an entire stream/riparian corridor to its former function and glory. It will be a wonderful place to hike, go birding and just hang out.”



## Upcoming Events

**May 13** Don't Fence Me In Trail Run, see page 1

**May 19** Ales for Trails

**June 3** National Trails Day. Join us for a workday at Tenmile Creek Park to complete the section of trail that will connect Spring Meadow Resources to the bridge spanning Tenmile Creek. We will celebrate our work with a barbecue! More details to come.

**June 13** Kids' hike on Mount Helena

**July 13** Kids' hike on Rodney Ridge

**August 8** Kids' hike on Bompat Hill



## 2017 Trail Workdays

The dates are set for the 2017 Trail Workday season. We will update the website with meeting places and projects as more details become available.

**April 17**  
**May 22**  
**June 19**  
**July 17**  
**September 18**

Details are subject to change. Visit [pricklypearlt.org](http://pricklypearlt.org) for more information.

## PPLT welcomes new members!

Thank you for joining us! Membership dues play a vital role in helping PPLT sustain and advance 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 October 26, 2016, and March 24,

2017, 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:

Ed & Mary Barrett  
Emma Beaver  
Andrew Carson  
Tom & Cathy Cherry  
John & Amy Cholnoky  
Dr. Tracy & Jill Anne Dill  
Steve Faherty  
Larry & Retta Fasbender  
Jesse & Joice Franzen  
Mary K Grande

John & Kathleen Hall  
John & Laura Heit  
Headwater Rafts  
Suzy Holt  
Janet Hughes  
Brad & Jody Hurd  
Jon & Chrisy Irey  
Mike & Dawn Lopach  
Regan & Mark Meredith  
Missouri River Forestry  
Jonathan Muzzall  
Denny Palmer  
Kevin & Mary Pitzer  
Ingrid & Jeff Radke  
Michael Sanders  
Alex Smietanka  
Len Walch



Dave Hagen

## Raz Retires!

In February, PPLT bid farewell to our beloved trails director **Robert (Raz) Rassmussen**.

We wish Raz the happiest of trails in his retirement and hope he always finds a trail back to visit his friends at PPLT.

"I have had the opportunity to work with Raz in two different organizations and I'll always admire and respect deeply his dedication to conservation and community," said Mary Hollow, PPLT executive director.

"I started last April as the trails intern. I appreciated how Raz took me along and introduced me to the community I would be working with. He is a thoughtful person — always on top of the details," said Nate Kopp, project associate.

We will miss him, but we know he'll stay connected to the trails.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John Beaver  
Tyrrell Hibbard  
Chris Hunter  
Paula Jacques  
Sarah Jaeger  
Jane Kollmeyer  
Jonathan Krauss  
Dennis Milburn  
Dawn North  
Ed Santos  
LeRoy Schramm  
Jim Utterback  
Erin Woodrow

## STAFF

Mary Hollow  
*Executive Director*  
Andrea Silverman  
*Land Protection Coordinator*  
Lanie White  
*Development Associate*  
Claudia Davis  
*Administrative Services*  
Peggy O'Neill  
*Communications and Events Coordinator*  
Emmett Purcell  
*Trails Assistant*  
Nate Kopp  
*Project Associate*

## PRICKLY PEAR LAND TRUST

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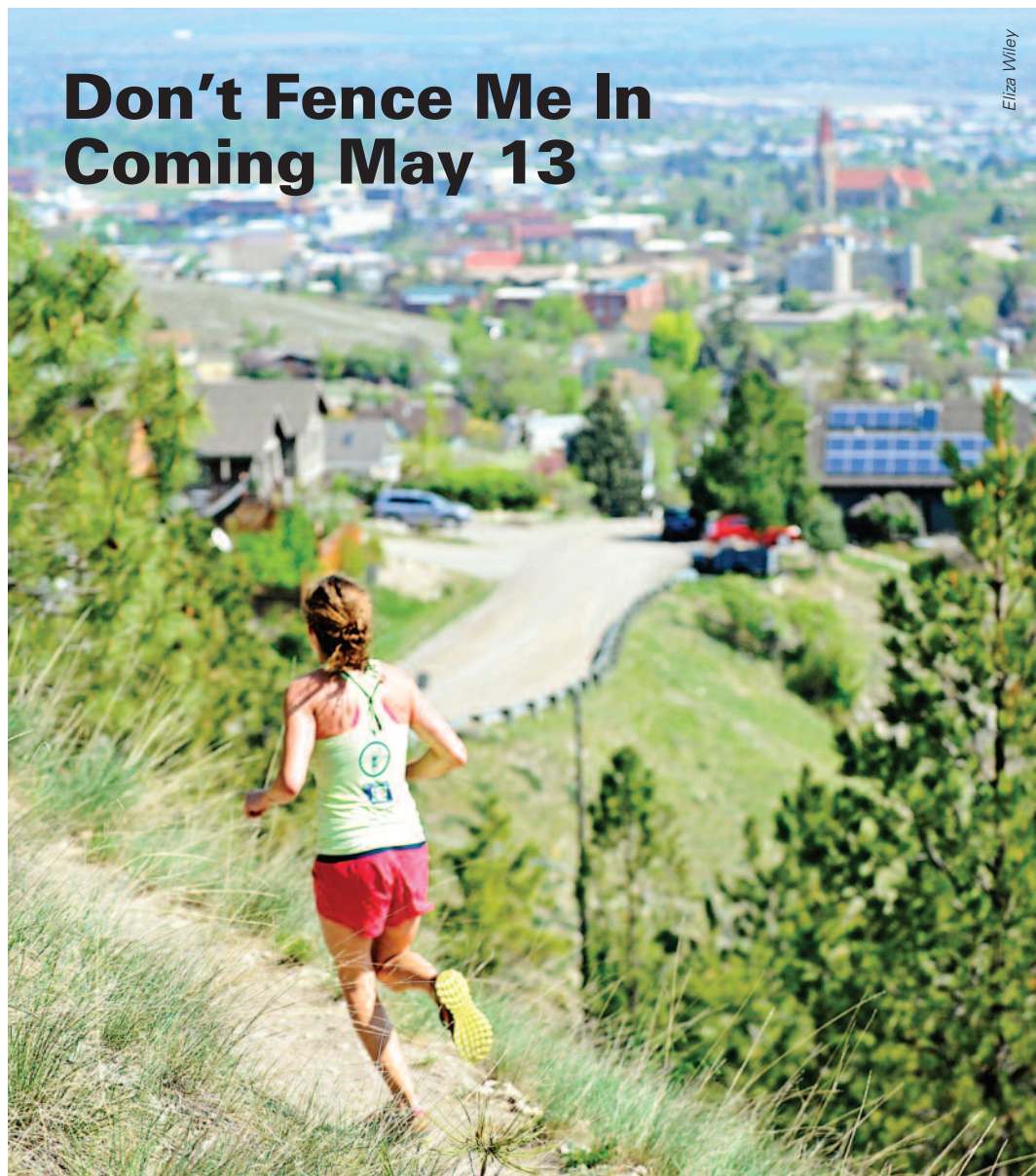
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SPRING 2017

## Don't Fence Me In Coming May 13



Eliza Wiley