



(AGRI)CULTURE OF CONSERVATION

THREE FAMILIES TRIPLE THE CONSERVATION IMPACT NEAR TOWNSEND

NOT ONE, NOT TWO, but an impressive three individual farm and ranch families have entered their properties into Prickly Pear Land Trust conservation easements. These Montana operators know the value of their land, not only for grazing and farming but also as entangled webs of ecosystems worth preserving. This cumulation of coordination creates a conservation corridor in a time and place under intense development pressure.

In the Upper Missouri River Valley, loss of habitat and agriculture production on irrigable acres to rural development would constitute a loss for the rural economy. The extra strain, runoff, and vegetation erosion would devastate water resources along the Missouri River, Deep Creek, and Crow Creek. Each property is unique but all three share deep roots involving the next generation in agricultural operations, from farming to welding, hauling, and herding.

"The Hahn family is proud to have worked together with PPLT to permanently preserve and maintain the character of our productive, open space lands. Projects like these help keep Montana a wonderful place to live, work, and play," says Chuck Hahn, longtime Broadwater County agricultural operator.

Folks in Broadwater County support the agriculture economy and want to keep working the land. They're willing to forfeit some potential uses and resale value to ensure the home ground stays in agriculture. Conservation easements effectively retire landowners' ability to subdivide land, build on or pave over increasingly rare farmland and valley bottom habitat. While landowners receive some financial compensation, each family donates significant value to work with the Land Trust to ensure the protection of the land. For many farm and ranch families, a little cash through a project like this can

help maintain a suitable land base and make farming and ranching more financially viable.

These three landmark easements constitute the 7th, 8th, and 9th land protection projects around the Fort Harrison and Limestone Hills facilities completed by the Land Trust, thanks to the help of supporters. The Montana Army National Guard at Fort Harrison and Nat Guard Bureau in Washington D.C. work closely with PPLT staff to secure funding, set priorities, and review proposals.

From the perspective of the Army, investing in land protection is a wise and cost-effective strategy. Without taking on additional land management, the military protects its training mission by creating a buffer of open space around its bases and training areas while

supporting conservation outcomes in the surrounding community. "The Montana Army National Guard is thrilled. We see our partnership with Prickly Pear Land Trust as a great community outcome protecting local farmland while meeting the goals of the military." Said, General Pete Hronek. "We are deeply grateful for every single person, business, and partner entity that supports the Land Trust to make our work and

projects like this possible," said Mary Hollow. "Having a broad support base also means bigger and better lasting community outcomes – parks, trails, and local agriculture, wildlife habitat – that will benefit our kids, and their kids." Farms, wildlife, and open space have champions in you and the people of Broadwater County.

"We are deeply grateful for every single person, business, and partner... who make projects like this possible."

–Executive Director Mary Hollow



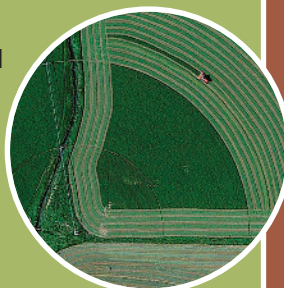
1 Hahn Ranch
Productive farmland with over 100 years of Montana family history and stewardship. This prized piece of property hosts a well-known and major tributary of the Missouri River, Deep Creek, a place where cold water meets the warmer currents of the Mighty Mo. On this ranch, much of the space has been set aside for wildlife habitat for generations of elk, antelope, moose, and trout.



2 The Crow Creek Ranch
Protects three braids of Crow Creek and the orchards of the historic Poe Ranch including 700+ acres of cottonwood galleries, lush grasses, and wetlands. The property is located on the portion of the water after it has left the Elkhorn Mountains (and the popular trail to Crow Creek Falls) where it spreads out in an oasis-like alluvial fan, a triangle-shaped deposit of gravel, sand, and sediment that supports a plethora of wildlife like moose and antelope.



3 Nelson Farms
Bridges a long stretch of the Missouri River adjacent to state land and the Tri-G conservation easement completed by PPLT in 2021. The easement protects 330 acres of irrigated, high-value crops and 0.6 miles of Missouri shoreline, bringing the total protected shoreline to more than three contiguous miles.



COMMUNITY CHAMPION, ERIC FEAVER

THIS SUMMER, HELENA LOST A HERO. Eric Feaver was a well-known mover and shaker for his work as a City Commissioner and union leader, but PPLT will fondly remember Eric as a champion of trails and open spaces. His smile was often seen in the fields of balsamroot and under the pines. He not only enjoyed recreating on Mount Helena, he contributed publicly and personally to ensure the lands he loved would be around for his grandchildren by generously giving two parcels of land to greatly expand the city park.

Last winter, Eric and PPLT's Mary Hollow bundled up and went to the new Greenway property in East Helena. As they walked a vast stretch of Prickly

Eric's trail of inspiration is long and it meanders through many facets and faces.

Pear Creek, Eric's curious nature prompted questions about the completed stream restoration and plans for future trails and slag pile. They paused several times in the cold and clear blue skies that day, as they soaked in the awe, they talked about Montana, our community, and the importance of equalizers like this land for its ability to connect future generations to their natural environment. When Eric retired, he dedicated much time to understanding the details of our current pursuits and offered an incredible amount of help.

In the words of Eric's wife, Ellen Feaver, "Eric hiked Mount Helena, the South Hills, the Scratchgravel

and other nearby trails almost daily. In winter, he would snowshoe the trails. No one took more pictures of beautiful scenery, flowers and streams to share with friends and family. More than most, he appreciated the beauty surrounding us all." We couldn't agree more.

Eric's absence has been felt in many ways these past few months because his life was so full. He would take pride in knowing how supported he made those around him feel and in the strength his memory will inspire. Eric's trail of inspiration is long and it meanders through many facets and faces. May we all love hard, soak up our time in nature, and serve the greater good.

PPLT has been working with the family and city leadership to find a way to honor Eric in the South Hills that he loved so dearly. More to come.



Eric and Ellen Feaver

A FRESH PERSPECTIVE

REFLECTIONS FROM PPLT INTERN

VOLUNTEERS ARE often talked about as the lifeblood of a non-profit; indeed they make the impossible possible. At the same time, many of us fail to recognize the force of nature that is an intern. Prickly Pear's recent intern is exactly that – full of life, unstoppable, and unforgettable. **Olivia Gervacio Jakabosky**, is a worldly and well-grounded student that came across the country to major in Conservation Biology at MSU. Wary at first of the duties surrounding the Montana Conservation Corps, thinking that a majority of it was wildland fire management or placements in Bureaucratic-heavy establishments wasn't a good fit for her.

When her counselor mentioned an organization that worked to "bridge the gap between the natural world and humanity," it spoke directly to her core. This is her life's mission as well. Olivia signed up, made the move from Bozeman to Helena, and shadowed each PPLT team member to learn the ways

of a conservation non-profit. She saw everything from the science and industry standards behind trail work to the cultivation of organizational support and the importance of storytelling. When she joined a site visit with the PPLT lands team, she was hooked. Hearing the passion in the voices of landowners explaining why they will protect their land often submerged her in rich Montana history – that really resonated and her personal relationship with the Big Sky State flourished.

She found that Montana wasn't just picturesque and vast, nearly untouchable; it was a land built around conservation values. Getting her hands dirty inventorying trees and shrubs at Sevenmile Creek and building pollinator boxes for Tenmile Creek Park allowed her to see the whole picture. Her internship also meant leading the Summer Walk Series and coordinating volunteer projects, effectively making her an informed steward of the land she was



falling in love with.

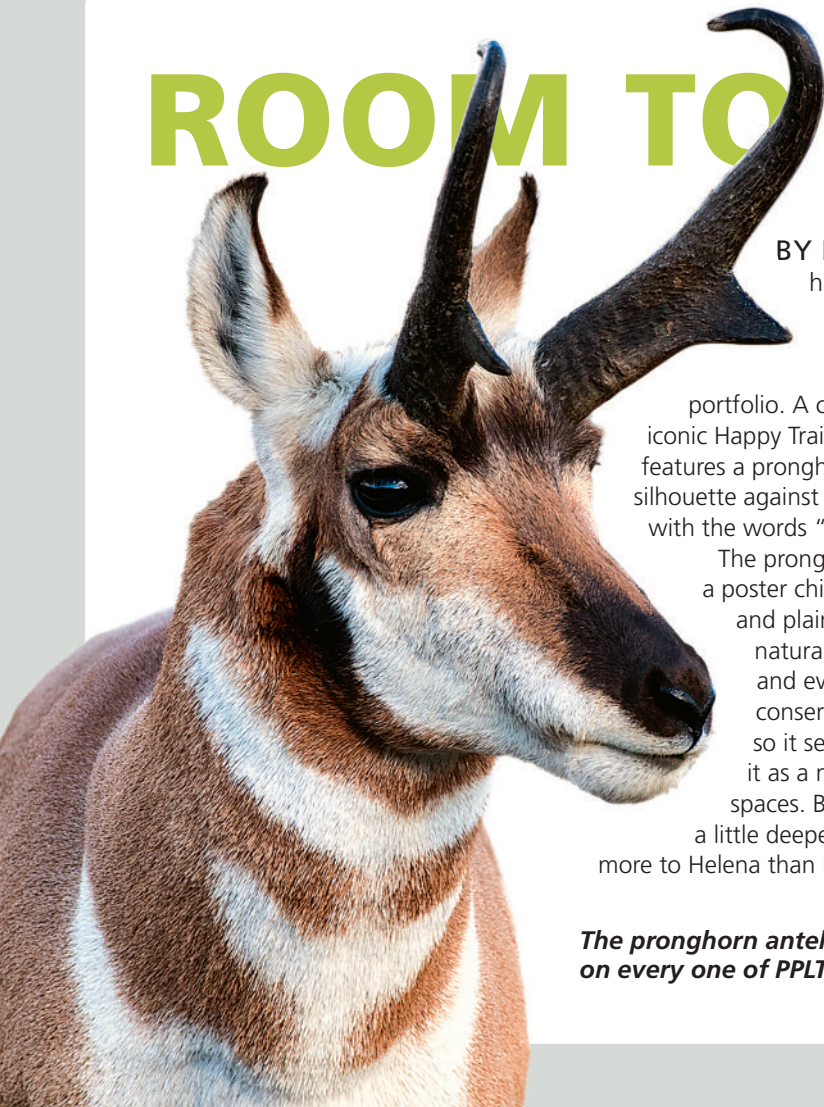
The experience showed her that a non-profit can be structured and balanced while offering creative liberty to pursue community wins. You don't necessarily have to "stay in your lane," to find creative solutions to help people connect with nature. Every position at PPLT is interwoven, interconnected, and housed in a nurturing environment where the human element is just as important as the land.

"Before this summer, no city has felt like home to me. In California, everyone is a stranger. In Bozeman, everyone (more or less) is just stopping by. In Helena, however, I felt and continue to feel both connected with the land and a community for the first time. Without you all connecting me with wonderful people, places, and experiences, I would've never fallen in love with Montana. Thank you." -Olivia

Intrigued? Want to intern with a local organization that works to connect land and people? Email info@pricklypearlt.org for more information.

ROOM TO ROAM

SPEEDGOAT ICON JOINS THE PACK



BY NOW you may have noticed a new sticker emerging from the Prickly Pear Land Trust portfolio. A close sibling of the iconic Happy Trails sticker, this one features a pronghorn antelope silhouette against a green background with the words "Room to Roam."

The pronghorn antelope is a poster child for grasslands and plains and finds a natural habitat on each and every one of PPLT's conservation easements so it seems fitting to have it as a mascot for open spaces. But when you delve a little deeper, this icon means more to Helena than meets the eye.

The pronghorn antelope finds a natural habitat on every one of PPLT's conservation easements.

A special herd of antelope has gained notoriety over the years: The Capitol Herd. Found between Helena and Townsend, this herd has been a well-known staple of the landscape. This group even helped populate the species throughout our great state. Now, the descendants of our local herd can be found far and wide.

When we look at the natural history of the pronghorn, it becomes apparent that there aren't many predators that can race them down. Evolved to outrun the North American cheetah (a now-extinct big cat), their speed keeps them safe from

wolves, mountain lions, and bears (oh my!).

The inclination of this grassland species is to move. Meander. Never stay in a single place for long. Our landscape is now peppered with cities and towns, houses, dams, and fences. These man-made obstacles inhibit the natural movement of many species.

PPLT is committed to the notion that open space is essential for well-being, not just for antelope but for all living things. What better mascot for that belief than an icon of the wild west whose existence stems from the vital need for room to roam?



FROM THE TRAILS DESK

TRAILS AS CONSERVATION

by Tim Lawrence

TRAILS REST at the intersection of the well-being of ecosystems and human enjoyment of those ecosystems. We often think trails are for our benefit, but this is only partly true, their primary function is to protect our natural resources and open spaces by keeping recreationists contained on one path, and from wandering at will. And at this point in history, in an increasingly developed and urban landscape, I think we can all agree that public lands are inherently good and important. Especially in this future we've built for ourselves, where weather patterns are more erratic and storms more severe, it is clear we need to keep the remaining green spaces open as possible.

So we protect natural areas as parks, in the Helena region, our city parks and national forest south of town are most prominent. We build trails on these lands so that when we explore, we limit our impact on the resource so future generations can do the same. We intentionally permanently alter part of the landscape, scarring the open lands by building trails, so that people who want to partake in the natural wonder of our open spaces can do so without

wanton destruction of an already limited resource. This, of course, requires the participation of the recreationist in conservation best practices.

Public lands are important and are here for conservation and recreation, this is especially true in Montana where the land is our legacy. The word "recreation" has roots, in French, regarding the physical and spiritual restoration from a good meal. It grew to include any activity that was physically and spiritually restorative. In terms of public lands that means hiking and running, biking and riding horses, hunting, fishing, and birding, the possibilities are endless. In our society, it may mean any hobby or sport as well, but we're not going into that here.

In recent years, studies have shown that just being outside in a natural setting such as a forested park, has the health benefits of reducing stress levels and blood pressure. You don't even need to be moving to gain these benefits, just present in a natural setting. (The Nature Fix by Florence Williams is an approachable breakdown of the recent science). Some doctors now prescribe time outside as the cure for what ails ya.

Given our unmatched access to trails, this is pivotal for our quality of life here in Helena. We can stay active and enjoy health benefits by partaking in the trails in our own backyard. We have a huge amount of public land. We have established trails so we can enjoy these environmentally, communally, and individually beneficial places together and responsibly. Volunteers and paid staff maintain those trails and update outdated trails when resources are available. We have trail professionals that are plugged into the recreation and trails community state and nationwide who plan routes for new multi-use trails throughout our system. All this so we can enjoy our public lands, our open lands, and our community without simultaneously destroying them. You really can have it all, Helena.

TRAIL SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

- **Nearly two miles of new LeGrande Trails were constructed on the 90-acre property PPLT gifted to Mount Helena in 2019. See below.**
- **1,480 Montana Conservation Corps hours**
- **1,093 volunteer hours equaling \$30,000 value**
 - 400+ on new LeGrande Trails
 - 602 on City Trails
 - 461 at Tenmile Creek Park and Sevenmile
 - 30 on US Forest Service lands

NEW LEGRANDE AREA TRAILS

YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED that Mount Helena City Park grew this season, expanding its boundary in the northwestern corner, thanks to recent donations to the City. The recent addition features a sentimental history and fresh new trails. the previous landowner, William Whyte loved this 90 acres south of the popular Le Grande Cannon Trail and graciously allowed access to it over the years. After his passing, estate representative and friend of Prickly Pear Land Trust, Rogers Little worked with the Land Trust to preserve William's legacy and ensure permanent public access. In 2019, PPLT worked with military partners from Fort Harrison and community leaders Ken and Liz Eden among many others to raise funds. Prickly Pear Land Trust assembled and completed the purchase of 90 acres of prime real estate, donating it to the City of Helena and thus, YOU, the public, in 2020.

This year, the Land Trust's Trails and Parks Coordinator, Tim Lawrence, organized the experts and the crews to design and build official trails. First, he

laid out new routes with help from PPLT's Trails Assistant Emmett Purcell, Trails and Programs Director Nate Kopp, and the City of Helena's Assistant Open Lands Manager Tyler Wock. Then, Tim led the construction of the trails with Montana Conservation Corps crews, volunteers, and PPLT's seasonal intern Olivia Gervacio Jakabosky. As a result, several miles of brand-new trails were added to the system.

Construction consisted of a few reroutes, including the Northwest Passage which was altered to accommodate private property and now connects the new Road to Mars Trail that reaches all the way down to LeGrande. Adopted into the system is a trail that climbs the backbone of the main ridge named Seven Sisters, and two more reroutes – Le Petit Pass and Charlie's Trail (named in honor of a happy tail-waggin companion) – make their way up to the ridge from the east and west. One trail created from scratch is the O. G. R. Trail (named in honor of Andy Fitzhugh), making excellent use of the landscape for a meandering hike or bike ride among

TIM 'THE TRAIL MAN' LAWRENCE

PPLT works on improvement one trail at a time

It's one thing to build up a vast public land and trail system as Prickly Pear Land Trust has done over the past 26 years hand in hand with the community. It's yet another to ensure those trails are properly maintained and managed.

Enter Tim Lawrence, our new(ish) Trails and Parks Coordinator. Tim proved his salt as a seasonal trail coordinator today and serves the Trail community with a wealth of trail management knowledge and experience. 2022 was his eighth trail season with prior trail gigs as a crew leader for both the Montana Conservation Corps and the Forest Service's Lincoln Ranger District where he worked on the backcountry trail crew. Tim is philosophical about life as well as trails – some 70 miles of them here locally. Tim sees that "everybody loves the trails," albeit in different ways. His goal is to "get people to see the trail system and the land it resides on as a great resource for the community."

"I'm excited to make everything work more smoothly, for the community, for our partner agencies, and for the land trust."

Tim is enthusiastic about his role, combining both in-the-field trail and lands work with some office duties. He intends to connect people to the landscape in creative ways. Collaboration with other agencies – the City of Helena, the U.S. Forest Service, Montana Fish,

Wildlife and Parks, and the Montana Conservation Corps – as well as local businesses and citizen groups that are volunteer-minded is essential.

Tim recently completed the route-finding, planning, and trail building on nearly two miles of trails this season working with Tyler Wock from the City Open Lands Department, Montana Conservation Corps, and community trail volunteers. He added, "We have a great community invested in our trails. When it

comes to trail building, we would not be able to do it without the local Montana Conservation Corps crews, truly."

Tim's Supervisor, Nate Kopp (Program and Trail Director) says: "Tim has

been an awesome addition to the team, he brings a calm demeanor and a level of consistency to everything he does.

A very intentional and thoughtful person, it's not uncommon to find a pastry or breakfast burrito on your desk in the morning courtesy of Tim. Nearly a decade of trails work allowed him to step in and take our program to new heights. It is no easy feat to construct two miles of trail entirely with volunteers and person-power in one season and that's exactly what he did this summer on the LeGrande trail additions."

When he's not covered in dirt and sawdust on the trail, he's cooking for friends or reading a book and writing with a french press of coffee.

Tim has already hit the ground running, give him a hello if you see him on the trails!



Construction consisted of a few reroutes, adoption of existing trails into the system, and one trail created from scratch.

ponderosas with breathtaking views of Mount Helena and the valley.

It's not every day we can add land to our city park and it's not every day we can add brand new miles of trails to our

beloved South Hills. This is an exceptional expansion of public land in our region to be celebrated far and wide that is made possible by the many contributions of many individuals.

ARE YOU A TRAIL LOVER?
Consider becoming a Cactus Club member.

By pledging a recurring monthly donation, you become part of the community that supports our work throughout the seasons. No monthly gift is too small to make a difference. Cactus Club starts at \$5 per month and great perks start at just \$10 per month! Visit pricklypearlt.org/give/cactus-club to join.

MOUNT ASCENSION
PARTNERSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT

Have you seen the new kid (brewery) on the block? Under the shadow of its namesake, Tucked into downtown Helena is Ascension Brewing. Behind the tap system is a map of trails, Mt. Helena and Mt. Ascension dominating the topographic area. The horseshoe bar allows a great view of the map, a TV, and the brewing room. It's a comfortable place—and you can even buy food!

Their grand opening was August 13; since then, they've been swamped. But it's not just their popularity that's interesting. It's their partnership with Prickly Pear Land Trust that's the kicker. Their Happy Trails IPA is serving double duty. Not only is it a refreshing, delicious beer, but 2% of the profits go to Prickly Pear Land Trust. Here's the best part: it's not just seasonal, it's FOREVER!

The beer was two years in the making and Bex, Head Brewer, says it's "her baby."



Bex approached PPLT Director Mary Hollow in 2020 about the idea. "We are thrilled to be partnering with Bex and her team, and we love the model of local giving," said Mary Hollow. Ascension Brewery wants to ensure that they're giving back to the community, and this partnership was their idea. But PPLT isn't the only Montana business that they support. The Happy Trails IPA is made with hops grown on Montana soil at the Big Sky Orchards & Hops Farm in Bigfork.

Just in case you needed some more encouragement, Bex says: "Come drink more beer so we can donate more money!"

SAVE THESE DATES!

Lantern Walk
Saturday, December 3, 4:30 pm
on Mount Helena

**East Helena Christmas
Stroll Merch Popup Booth**
Galaxy Coffee Roasters
10 W Main Street, East Helena
Thursday, December 1

**Don't Fence Me In
Trail Run 2023**
Saturday, May 13

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Sarah Alling	Adam Kraft
Andrew Anderson	Corinna Krick
Cameron Betchey	Bert Lindler
Peter Brumm	Pat McNicol
Riley & Leah	Scott Pfeifer
Burnham	Patricia & Gerald
Caryn Davidson	Shields
Emily Dean	Mike & Karen
Anna Denton	Stevenson
Raymond Dominick	Gordon & Pat
Matt Ellwein	Tallent
Mark & Mary	Tammy & John
Keeffe	Wilkins

SAVE THE DATE
SEPTEMBER 23, 2023



PPLT's Harvest Moon Banquet
and Auction will be back in 2023!

After a three-year hiatus, this will be a return
to remember! Dust off your dancing shoes and
bolo, Harvest Moon is coming back in style.
We cannot wait to see you there!



Kevin League

connecting land
and people

PRICKLY PEAR
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WINTER 2022

(AGRI)-
CULTURE OF
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TRAILS
UPDATE

