



# VITAL NEWS



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WHERE THE GRIZZLY CAN WALK, THE EARTH IS HEALTHY AND WHOLE.

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## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S CORNER



Shortly after the election last fall, I discovered that an old friend and colleague was serving on the Obama Transition Team's "Interior Department Agency Review Team." After sending my friend congratulations, one thing led to another and Vital Ground was encouraged to submit our perspective on grizzly recovery issues to the new administration. Here was a golden opportunity to speak on behalf of grizzlies and help shape future conservation actions.

We canvassed our board, our advisors, and several key experts in grizzly conservation to develop a short briefing paper. Here is a summary of its major points:

At the time the grizzly bear was listed under the Endangered Species Act in 1975, an estimated 500-600 grizzlies remained in the lower 48 states. By 2009, with recovery and management efforts, the population had grown to an estimated 1,400 to 1,500 animals and the Greater Yellowstone population had been delisted. Yet these bears survive on less than 2% of the grizzly's original range, and the grizzly's future is far from secure.

**The most critical issues for continued grizzly recovery in the lower 48 states are habitat loss and fragmentation, human-caused mortality of bears, and the need to augment several precariously small and isolated grizzly populations.**

**Habitat Conservation:** The six grizzly bear recovery zones in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming and Washington include large blocks of wild and rural lands, both public and private, that serve as core habitat. Yet each of these ecosystems is isolated from the others and it is difficult to maintain connections between populations. Intervening lands are increasingly fragmented by development and by busy highways and railroads that increase the risk of bear fatalities and create physical barriers to movement.

National parks and wilderness areas, regardless of their size, won't fully protect nature in the long run, both because of genetic isolation and because of climate change, which affects all life on earth. The grizzly and many other species cannot be sustained solely within the boundaries of existing protected areas. For wild communities to endure there has to be the potential for animals and plants to disperse, move long distances and adjust to habitat change. Linkage zones between core habitats will determine whether or not wild creatures can adapt to change and survive. Yet because of the increasingly swift pace of development in and near grizzly territory, leading wildlife biologists say we have just 10 years—maybe less—to identify and secure the remaining private lands that will allow grizzlies and other wildlife to link to sister populations on neighboring protected lands.

*Vital Ground recommends that the Department of Interior support and adequately fund efforts to maintain and restore habitat connectivity between all large blocks of public land in the northern Rockies. These efforts should include:*

- Working with willing landowners and conservation organizations to secure strategically located private lands; and
- Modifications to highways and railroads to provide safe wildlife crossings.

*(Continued on page 4)*

THE MISSION OF VITAL GROUND IS TO PROTECT AND RESTORE NORTH AMERICA'S  
GRIZZLY BEAR POPULATIONS BY CONSERVING WILDLIFE HABITAT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

# Vital Ground Expands Habitat Protection in the Curley Creek Valley<sup>1</sup>

In the far northeast corner of the Idaho Panhandle, a small meandering stream runs along the base of the Purcell Mountain range. From its origins at Perkins Lake, Curley Creek winds through dense cedar-hemlock forests, sprawling wetlands and beaver ponds before plunging down a steep descent into the Kootenai River Canyon. Along its eight-mile course it wanders from Idaho to Montana and back again, running past farms and homes, and flows almost entirely through private lands.

Curley Creek also serves as the northwestern border of the Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone, which supports a small, imperiled population of approximately 45 grizzly bears. The wetlands and forest found in this valley bottom provide early season forage for grizzlies coming out of the higher elevations on adjacent national forest lands. With two new conservation easements that protect 110 acres in the Curley Creek drainage, Vital Ground is ensuring the Cabinet-Yaak grizzlies have a little more space to roam.

Sam and Carolyn Testa came to Vital Ground in the spring of 2008 asking for assistance to protect their lands from future development. “We purchased the property while on vacation in 1998, when we were struck by the natural beauty and abundant wildlife in North Idaho. Since then, we have noticed an increasingly disturbing pattern of similar properties being bought and subdivided throughout this area.”

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*By protecting these properties, Vital Ground offers an opportunity for the Yaak grizzly bears to move into the valleys with reduced potential for human conflict.*

— Wayne Kasworm,  
USFWS biologist

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While development pressure has increased throughout North Idaho and the Curley Creek drainage, the conservation easements donated by the Testas are made even more valuable by the fact that they build upon existing conservation properties. The two parcels protected by the Testas are adjacent to other private lands under conservation easement through The Nature Conservancy of Idaho and the Wetland Reserve Program administered by the Natural Resource Conservation Services. Together with the Testa properties, this creates a complex of 772 acres of private conservation lands.

This complex provides habitat to the grizzly bears in the nearby Yaak River Valley, which move frequently between the United States and Canada. The Yaak is estimated to have a minimum population of 25 to 30 grizzly bears, while the Cabinet Mountains to the south have an estimated minimum of 15 to 20 bears. In 1999,



Photo by Vital Ground

*The rich wildlife habitat encompassing the Testa family's lands in northern Idaho is now protected forever through two new conservation easements.*

the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that the Cabinet-Yaak population and the Selkirk population to the west warranted endangered status under the Endangered Species Act but the listing was precluded by other priority species. The greatest threat to these grizzly populations is human-caused mortality, occurring on both private and public lands.

Up slope from the parcels, the mountainsides are managed by the Kootenai National Forest as the Buckhorn Ridge Roadless Area. Over the years there have been numerous sightings of grizzly bears reported by hikers and hunters recreating on Buckhorn Ridge. “As development occurs in the valley bottoms, the bears lose valuable low elevation spring range. By protecting these properties, Vital Ground offers an opportunity for the Yaak grizzly bears to move into the valleys with reduced potential for human conflict,” says Wayne Kasworm, biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and primary researcher for the Cabinet-Yaak grizzly bear population.

The Testa properties are clad in dense forest and surround a small pond, and show an abundance of use by bears, moose and other wildlife that find food and shelter here. The properties not only provide habitat for wildlife, but also serve to conserve the rural character of the Curley Creek community, another reason that the Testas decided to place their lands under conservation easement. “We came to the Curley Creek area because of the rural feel of the community. We want to do our part to preserve that lifestyle. As a farmer I understand that the land must work for people as well as for wildlife.”

The Curley Creek conservation easements are a significant contribution to Vital Ground's effort, in partnership with Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, to increase habitat conservation between the Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk ecosystems for grizzly bears and other wildlife. In addition to grizzly bears, the Curley Creek Valley supports many other wildlife species, including gray wolf, Canada lynx and wolverine. Vital Ground is pleased to begin work in the Curley Creek Valley and the easements donated by the Testas are our first steps toward conserving wildlife habitat on this diverse landscape. 🐾

**Grizzly Mortality:** Most grizzly bear mortality in the lower 48 states is human-caused. Although bears are killed on highways and by trains, in most cases fatalities occur because of conflicts related to human behavior in grizzly country, such as improper garbage management, food attractants at recreational cabins, and improper food storage in campgrounds. Grizzlies are also sometimes shot—accidentally, maliciously and in self-defense.

The risk of human-caused mortality can be greatly reduced by public education—expanding cooperative and outreach programs that increase public awareness and help people change their own behavior to reduce risk to themselves and to bears. Ultimately, education results in more secure habitat and safe travel zones for bears.

*Vital Ground recommends that the Department of Interior support funding for conflict prevention to reduce human-caused bear mortality.*

**Population Augmentation:** Three of the six grizzly bear recovery ecosystems (Selkirk, Cabinet-Yaak, and North Cascades) have precariously low grizzly populations, and one (Selway-Bitterroot)

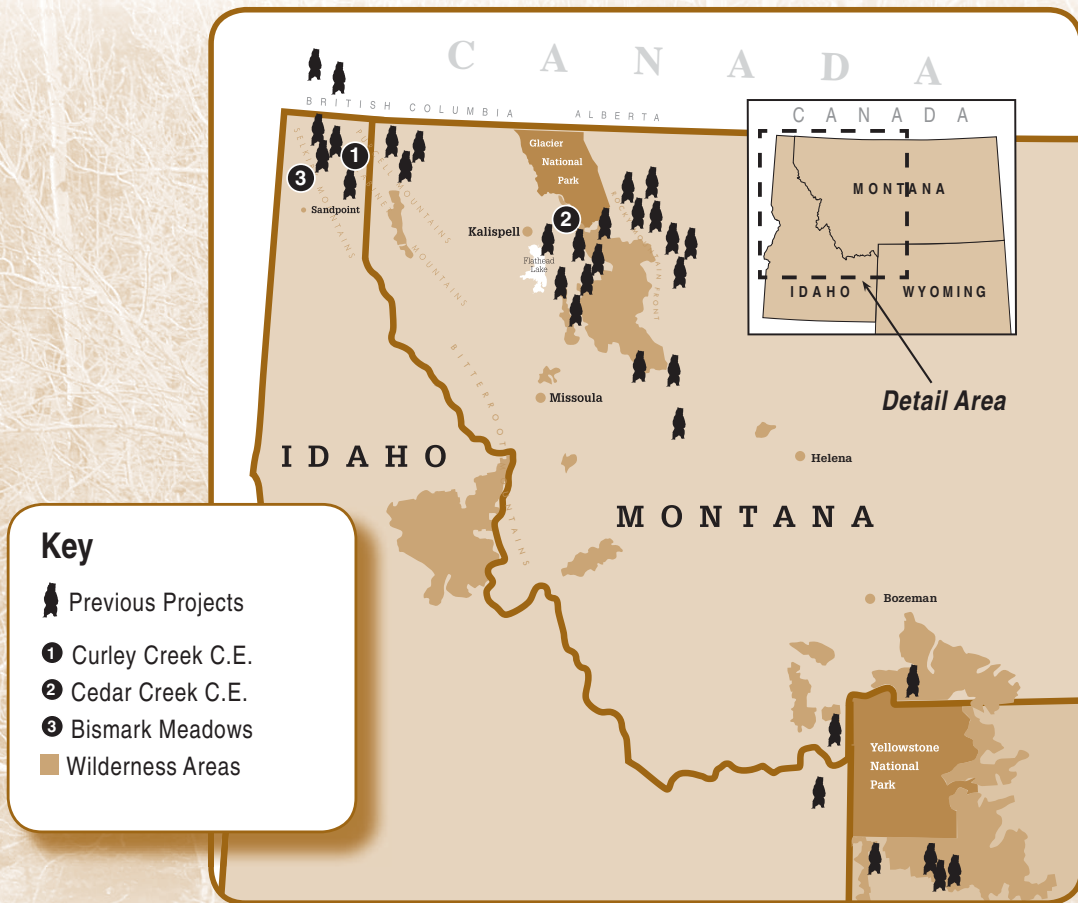
has no resident grizzlies. Increasing the number of grizzlies in each of these ecosystems to a viable level is essential to grizzly recovery, not only to secure the population in each recovery area but to increase the viability of the overall grizzly bear population in the lower 48.

*Vital Ground recommends that the Department of Interior support the ongoing augmentation of grizzlies into the Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk ecosystems over the next 10 years; implement and fund the Selway-Bitterroot Recovery Plan; and initiate environmental analysis and public scoping to develop a strategy to recover grizzlies in the North Cascades.*

We are excited to have the occasion to share the urgency of grizzly bear conservation with the new administration. This is also an opportunity to increase our visibility and enhance our credibility with the new leadership at the Department of Interior. Hopefully, grizzly bear conservation will receive renewed attention, and Vital Ground can serve as a “go to” source when Interior seeks advice and input on these issues. 🐾

*The complete briefing paper is available on Vital Ground’s website.*  
—Gary J. Wolfe

## PROJECT LOCATOR MAP - LOWER 48 STATES



Background photo by [www.lanceschelvan.com](http://www.lanceschelvan.com)



Photo by [www.demanczuk.com](http://www.demanczuk.com)

## Vital Ground Initiates its First Project in the North Fork of the Flathead<sup>2</sup>

Sandwiched between the Flathead National Forest and Glacier National Park, the wild and scenic North Fork of the Flathead River flows south out of British Columbia into some of Montana's most picturesque grizzly country. As this wild river approaches its confluence with the Middle Fork of the Flathead near the town of Columbia Falls, it comes under ever increasing development and recreational pressures—activities that often conflict with the area's spectacular wildlife values. American Rivers recently designated the North Fork one of the five most endangered rivers in America.

Late in 2008, Vital Ground partnered with Ed and Teresa Levert and Catherine Deans-Barrett to begin work toward permanent protection of 160 acres near Cedar Creek in the Flathead Valley, approximately six miles north of Columbia Falls. The property is entirely surrounded by national forest and contains numerous pothole ponds and riparian areas. It is blanketed by forest, which the owners have specifically managed with an emphasis on forest health and diversity of tree species.

The North Fork watershed encompasses a large portion of the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE), which includes Glacier National Park and millions of acres of wilderness, national forest and other lands in northwest Montana. The NCDE was the focus of a recent ground-breaking grizzly bear DNA study (see *Brown Bear's World*, *Vital News* Fall 2008), indicating that it is one of the last strongholds for grizzlies in the lower 48 states that sustains a genetically diverse population of bears with solid connections to their Canadian counterparts.

However, the research analysis also revealed early signs of genetic isolation between bears on either side of the Highway 2 corridor in the western portion of the NCDE, where development has rapidly increased in the past decade. Sustaining movement corridors in this area is critical to the overall health of the NCDE grizzly population. The Cedar Creek Conservation Easement is our first opportunity to protect the vital habitat connections that remain in this area.

Vital Ground has executed a letter of intent to complete a fully donated conservation easement on this property this coming summer, and baseline work and other due diligence items supporting the project will begin about the time Vital Ground members receive this newsletter. We are excited to have an opportunity to protect habitat so important to NCDE grizzlies. Stay tuned for an update on this project in the Fall 2009 issue of *Vital News!* 🐾

# Provisional Grant Awarded for Bismark Meadows<sup>3</sup>

We are pleased to announce that the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation has awarded Vital Ground a provisional grant of \$196,000 through the Northwest Wildlife Conservation Initiative (NWCI) to help protect Bismark Meadows in northern Idaho.

The NWCI was formed in response to a \$7 million, three-year matching grant to The Nature Conservancy from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation to protect critical lands in Idaho, Washington, and Oregon. The initiative partners include TNC in all three states, Defenders of Wildlife in

Oregon, Lava Lake Land and Livestock in Idaho, and Wilburforce Foundation in Washington. The initiative's overall goal is to build upon the initial investment by Doris Duke and secure a total of at least \$38 million for conservation priorities across the three states.

Vital Ground's provisional award is specific to its projects in the Bismark Meadows area of northern Idaho and requires a 5:1 match of private or other funds. We must meet this match—a fundraising goal of \$980,000—by year-end 2010.

"I'm excited by this opportunity, even in these challenging economic times," says Gary Wolfe, Vital Ground executive director. "I'm confident that existing individual, foundation, and corporate

donors will give above and beyond their regular annual gifts and help us recruit new supporters along the way. Bismark Meadows is just too important to lose."

Bismark Meadows lies within the 2,220 square-mile Selkirk Mountains Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone, where only 40-50 grizzlies remain. This population is genetically and demographically isolated from adjacent populations, and the whole ecosystem, including the US and Canadian parts of the Selkirk range, harbors less than 100 bears.

Increasingly, subdivisions and second homes in northern Idaho are pushing deeper and deeper into core, privately held wildlife areas like Bismark Meadows. Conversion of high quality habitat to human habitation is a major factor that contributes to grizzly population fragmentation and mortality.

Along with Vital Ground, NWCI is working with dozens of partners across the Pacific Northwest to advance critical land protection projects and build support and capacity for future conservation efforts. Projects supported by the initiative must align with the priorities identified by the states in their wildlife action plans, which serve to outline the steps needed to conserve wildlife and habitat before they become more rare and more costly to protect. 🐾

## ***We Need Your Help!***

The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's provisional grant presents us with our largest-ever fundraising challenge. Can you help us raise \$980,000 by the end of 2010 to permanently secure Bismark Meadows?

Please consider making a special contribution—the most generous you can afford—toward our NWCI matching grant requirement. Simply visit: [www.vitalground.org/bismarkmatchinggrant](http://www.vitalground.org/bismarkmatchinggrant).

Thank you!



Photo by [www.jamiescarrow.com](http://www.jamiescarrow.com)

## **Vital Ground Public Service Announcement**

**Get it played in your  
neck of the woods**

Actor Brad Pitt generously recorded a 60-second PSA for Vital Ground to encourage protection of wild lands critical to the grizzly's survival.

Can you ask your favorite local radio station to run this PSA? Simply direct the station manager to our website, [www.vitalground.org](http://www.vitalground.org), to download the audio file and script. From our homepage, select the News and Events dropdown menu; select Online Press Kit; then select Public Service Announcement. Everything the station needs is right there online. The PSA is also available on compact disc.

If you have questions or would like a copy of the PSA disc, contact us at 406-549-8650 or [development@vitalground.org](mailto:development@vitalground.org). Thanks for helping spread the word about conservation of vital habitat!



Photo by [www.demanczuk.com](http://www.demanczuk.com)

## **Prairie Thunder Wine**

by Ten Spoon Vineyard + Winery

A special blend of Petite Sirah and Zinfandel, *Prairie Thunder* offers the silky, rich flavors of dark cherry, coffee and chocolate on a berry field, with a hint of strawberry. No sulfites are added to any Ten Spoon wines. *Prairie Thunder* is available in retail shops across the state of Montana. A list of shops can be found on the winery's website. The winery also ships wine by FedEx Ground to other states, where allowable.

Visit [www.tenspoonvineyard.com](http://www.tenspoonvineyard.com), email [vgorder@tenspoon.com](mailto:vgorder@tenspoon.com), or phone the winery at (406) 549-8703 for more information.

Vital Ground receives \$1.00 for each bottle of *Prairie Thunder* purchased.



## Help Keep Grizzly Country

# *Forever wild*

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- ❖ **Conservation Easements**

**Visit [www.vitalground.org](http://www.vitalground.org) or call 406-549-8650**

Photo by [www.demanczuk.com](http://www.demanczuk.com)

## Seus's Ambassador Wolves Star in Award-Winning Film

This past October, *Lobo: The Wolf that Changed America*, won the Jury's Special Prize at the prestigious 2008 Wildscreen Festival in Bristol, England. The film featured wolves trained by Sausha Seus, daughter of Vital Ground founders Doug and Lynne Seus.

The film relates the moving story of a pivotal moment in America's conservation history. In the autumn of 1863, Ernest Thompson Seton rode into New Mexico on a mission to exterminate a cattle-killing wolf named "Lobo" that had an almost mythical ability to cheat death and elude the traps that ranchers set for him throughout the countryside. Seton, a naturalist as well as a professional trapper, was hired to eliminate this "super-wolf." The battle of wits between human and wolf sparked a wilderness drama that forever changed Seton's feelings about predators and drove him to write about and promote the idea of conserving America's wild heritage. Seton's encounter with Lobo left a lasting effect on a new movement in America: wilderness preservation.

To portray Lobo and his mate, Blanca, the film's producers turned to Sausha Seus and her trained wolves at Wasatch Rocky Mountain Wildlife. Sausha gained her deep understanding of animal behavior by growing up in intimate daily contact with the wolves, brown bears and other wildlife trained by her father, and she inherited the Seus gift for communicating with animals. She has been working with wolves for seventeen years.

Sausha currently works with a total of twelve wolves, training them to carry out an array of behaviors for the camera, from running, playing, chasing, and retrieving to snarling and "attacking" the trainer. All of the wolves are male—intentionally so to eliminate any competitive hierarchy over a female, and to allow Sausha to take the role of alpha female.

Sausha's training techniques use positive reinforcement, never force. "We ask them for a behavior and they decide if they want to do it or not," she explains. With quick and intelligent minds, the wolves love to learn, and are rewarded with treats, praise, affection, play and ear and belly scratches. "Wolves are so keen, they never forget anything," Sausha explains. "With dogs, you need to remind them and re-establish behaviors. Wolves remember everything that ever happened to them, and you don't need to re-establish a behavior like you do with a dog."



*Yukon*



*Cree*



*Spirit*

Five wolves were used in filming *Lobo*: three gray wolves that portrayed *Lobo* himself, Coda, Yukon and Moon, and two white Arctic wolves, Spirit and Cree, that played the part of Blanca, *Lobo*'s mate. Describing their varied personalities, Sausha says, "Coda is an angel, always happy to be with you and he loves affection. He is always the first to greet me and loves his belly rubbed. Yukon is aloof and independent and very self-assured. I'm lucky to get one or two kisses a week. He's also the trickster: he'll grab my hat and run away with it."

"Moon seems to be a little bit ADD! He'll pay attention, but gets distracted easily. He's very sweet and loves everyone, but we think his olfactory sense is especially acute. He doesn't like the smell of bones or hides, and while filming he was afraid of the cows—we had to tell him the cows weren't going to hurt him!"

"Spirit is a little bit in between," she continues. "Spirit makes his own decisions on who can come into his pack, but he's full of light and love. And Cree is the peacemaker. Whenever there's a conflict between the other wolves, he gets in the middle, and his personality is calm and peaceful."

Yet if life with a wolf seems romantic, Sausha doesn't recommend a wolf or wolf-hybrid as a pet. If you try to raise a wolf in your home, she says, you have to watch them 24 hours a day. "You can't take your eyes off them or they're into your cupboards and eating your stereo speakers. Wolf psychology is so much different from domestic dogs. You can't correct a wolf for eating your sofa pillow or trying to kill your cat. Guarding and possessing trophies is a part of their psychology. You can't reprimand them because they don't understand it, and they'll get frustrated and insecure."

Although the *Seus* wolves were all were born in captivity, they live with the companionship of a large and rambunctious pack, room to race and play, and the mental stimulation of learning and working with Sausha. They also serve as ambassadors for their wild kin by giving film-makers the opportunity to portray the beauty and intimate details of wolf behavior.

*Lobo: The Wolf that Changed America* premiered on the PBS series *NATURE* on Sunday, November 23, 2008. The full episode as well as an interview with Sausha can be viewed by visiting: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/the-wolf-that-changed-america/introduction/4260/>. DVD copies of the program can be purchased at [www.shopthirteen.org](http://www.shopthirteen.org). 🐾



*Cree and Sausha*



*Moon and Sausha*



*Coda*

All photos by Scott Smith [www.fourpawsphotography.com](http://www.fourpawsphotography.com)



The first time Jack Langer, a native of Erie, Pennsylvania, set foot in grizzly country a few years ago, he and his son, John, had booked a stay at one of Montana's most deluxe dude ranches. "I knew right away that wasn't the real Montana," said Jack. Father and son ended up driving up the road for most of their meals to Trixie's, an old landmark tavern, and exploring Glacier National Park and old Montana gold digs.

The landscape captured Jack. "A lot of people in the East don't realize the beauty of the West," muses Jack. "It's just such a beautiful world."

Growing up in Erie, Jack Langer and Doug Seus, Vital Ground's co-founder, were teenage buddies who worked together for a road company, as doormen at a local nightclub, and painting houses. "Even then Doug was legendary in Pennsylvania. He was always out looking for reptiles and amphibians, always a lot of laughs, always full of charisma," says Jack, who fell victim to some of Doug's good-natured pranks.

When the two started a house painting business together, Jack confessed to a fear of heights and begged off most of the ladder work. But one day Doug shamed his pal into crawling up on the roof to paint the eaves—and then moved the ladder ten feet over. Jack flattened himself spread-eagle on the roof, bellowing for the ladder, and got a good dig back at Doug who was never quite sure if Jack's rooftop performance didn't have a big streak of Jack the Comic. "He's one of the world's best comedians," declares Doug. "Always laughing, and with a wry humor—you're never quite sure until he busts out laughing."

Doug had a sizeable collection of reptiles, including venomous snakes, and one day gleefully showed Jack a "black mamba"—a native of Africa and one of the world's deadliest snakes. Letting the snake wrap itself around Jack's arm, Doug had Jack squirming in fear for his life before finally letting on that it was a harmless black snake common to the eastern deciduous woods. "Even then," Jack says generously, "it was always amazing how Doug related to animals."

Eventually both men married and drifted down separate trails. While Doug moved west to Utah and a life with Lynne training animals for film, Jack married Maria Langer and set up a plumbing business in Erie. Starting with nothing more than a station wagon and a drain snake, Jack gradually built his company into one of the largest plumbing, heating and air-conditioning services in the northeast.

Jack relied on the old business mainstays of hard work, integrity, and customer service, making himself available 24/7 before there was such a term. He threw in a good dose of humor with light-hearted advertising. Now celebrating 30 years in the business, H. Jack's Plumbing & Heating Company serves Pennsylvania, Ohio and New York, and it's all in the family. Both of Jack and Maria's kids, John



*Photo by Adriana Langer*

*Member Jack Langer (R) reunites with old friend Doug Seus at the 2008 Vital Ground board meeting in Chicago.*

and Adriana, are involved in the business and John owns the Ohio branch.

Last year, Jack had the chance to return to grizzly country and see it through the eyes of his boyhood pal. "We hadn't seen each other in years, but it was like we'd never separated," says Doug. "We had

a ball." The old friends watched wolves in Yellowstone and Doug taught Jack to fly-fish on the Boulder and Yellowstone Rivers. "I didn't catch a fish, but I didn't care. It was the best vacation ever," recalls Jack.

"Jack just absorbs everything—he's so thirsty for knowledge and he just sponges it up," Doug says of his friend. "He's enamored with the health of the planet, with the connections in nature." Seeing Rocky Mountain wildlife and landscapes with Doug, Jack came to understand the urgency of Vital Ground's mission to protect habitat for wildlife and became an enthusiastic supporter.

Back in Pennsylvania, Jack began spreading the word about Vital Ground with his friends and business associates, inspiring new memberships and donations. Hoping to reach a larger audience, Jack also convinced Barry Steinhagen of Connoisseur Media, LLC, to run Vital Ground's public service announcement on three Erie radio stations. The PSA aired several hundred times on country music station WTWF "93.9 The Wolf," news and talk station WJET "Jet Radio 1400," and Fox Sports Radio station WFNN "1330 The Fan."

"It amazes me to see how far Vital Ground has come. The work they're doing is just unbelievable, and with the help of Vital Ground I hope my grandchildren will see the wildlife and wild places I've seen," says Jack. "I'm such a believer in Vital Ground and feel so privileged to be a part of it."

"Jack's a kind, gentle, giving and extremely spiritual man," says Doug. "He has always been captivated by nature and life and biology, but back then we didn't get much of that in school. He's self-made, and he always fights for the common man. He wholeheartedly gives his energy and time and money, and I can't say enough about his hard work and integrity. There's a fire burning—something that's ignited in him." Jack Langer demonstrates what a single Vital Ground member, with a heart full of passion, can do for grizzly country. 🐾



## Receive Vital News by Email

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## The Strength of Connections: Vital Ground Premieres New Video

*Vital Ground: The Strength of Connections*, a new six-minute promotional video, premiered this past October at Chicago's Brookfield Zoo in conjunction with our fall board of trustees meeting. About one hundred Vital Ground supporters attended a special reception in the zoo's beautiful Seven Seas exhibit, where Atlantic bottlenose dolphins greeted guests through viewing windows.

An introduction to Vital Ground's conservation work, the video details how the organization protects habitat crucial for grizzly bear survival in North America. Using footage of trained and wild grizzlies and sweeping vistas of grizzly country, the short film tells the story of the great bear's plight and the ever-increasing importance of private lands conservation. It features founders Doug and Lynne Seus and other Vital Ground supporters.

*The Strength of Connections* was produced at no cost to Vital Ground through the generosity of Vital Ground board member

### Vital Ground License Plates Available

Renowned artist Monte Dolack ([www.dolack.com](http://www.dolack.com)) designed the Great Bear that graces the new Vital Ground specialty Montana license plate. You can obtain these plates whether you're in Montana or elsewhere.

*Are you a Montana resident?* You can display a Vital Ground license plate on your vehicle. First-time cost of plates is \$35 and includes a \$20 donation to Vital Ground. Annual renewal fee is only \$20, all of which goes to Vital Ground. You don't have to wait until your current plates expire, so visit your local County Treasurer's Office today!

*Not in Montana?* Collector plates are also available for only \$30 plus shipping through the Vital Ground website ([www.vitalground.org](http://www.vitalground.org)) or by phoning us directly (406-549-8650). Personalize your plate for only \$10 extra (six characters maximum, allow 4-6 weeks for delivery).



John Swallow and his colleague Joe Matza of EFILM, a Hollywood, California company that provides advanced digital imaging for major film studios. The video was directed by John Swallow. Curtis Krick co-produced, wrote and narrated, Derek Reich directed the photography, and Dave Simmons was editor and graphic designer. Music was composed by Tommy Kay and performed by Tommy Kay, Mark Cargill and Clarence Robinson. Brian Holt was recording engineer and mixer.

The video can be viewed at Vital Ground's website. Go to [www.vitalground.org](http://www.vitalground.org); from the top navigation bar select Multimedia Gallery, then click on Video Library. You can also watch the video at our YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/fortheGrizzly](http://www.youtube.com/fortheGrizzly). Follow the instructions on the YouTube channel to embed this or any of our other videos into your own web or blog site.

To request a free DVD copy of *The Strength of Connections*, drop us a line at [info@vitalground.org](mailto:info@vitalground.org) or phone us at 406-549-8650. The DVD is a great tool for house parties (see page 12) and fundraisers! 🐾

### Great Gear ... Good for Griz!

Shop REI online through our special link at [www.vitalground.org](http://www.vitalground.org), and REI will donate a whopping 7% of your purchase cost to Vital Ground—at no extra charge to you! Complete your shopping in a few clicks and help save habitat for grizzlies! **To trigger the donation, you must access the REI website through the REI link on Vital Ground's website.** Simply go to [www.vitalground.org](http://www.vitalground.org) and click on the REI link.



Background photo by [www.jamiescarrow.com](http://www.jamiescarrow.com)

# Renew Your Membership & Receive a Special Gift

Has your Vital Ground membership lapsed? We want you back! To sweeten your return, for a limited time you can reinstate your membership online and receive the same great gifts as our new members. Why are we doing this? Because one single individual—YOU—can make a significant difference in Vital Ground's all-out effort to protect the precious remaining acres of land crucial to grizzly bear survival.

**To claim your Vital Ground gifts, just go to [www.vitalground.org](http://www.vitalground.org), then click "Reinstate Membership" on the left-hand navigation bar.**

A single individual can make a great difference in protecting habitat and connectivity—you can affirm that by reinstating your Vital Ground membership today. 🐾

## Gifts

### *\$25 Special Re-introductory Offer*

- Bart the Bear jumbo magnet
- Renewed subscription of Vital News
- E-mail alerts
- Vital Ground bumper sticker

### *\$35 Basic Membership*

- All previous, PLUS
- Bart the Bear mouse pad

### *\$50 Supporter*

- All previous, PLUS
- Vital Ground logo t-shirt

### *\$100 Grizzly Friend*

- All previous, PLUS
- DVD copy of *Real Grizzly* documentary featuring Jennifer Aniston

### *\$250 Conservationist*

- All previous, PLUS
- Oversized Vital Ground duffel bag

### *\$500 Bart the Bear Legacy Member*

- All previous, PLUS
- Vintage poster of Vital Ground founder Doug Seus and Bart the Bear—autographed by Doug!

# Vital Ground Needs You!

No one needs to remind you of the tough economic landscape we all find ourselves in. Because Vital Ground runs a tight ship and can often leverage dollars with partners, we have so far weathered the downturn and remain focused on our goal of protecting key private lands crucial to grizzly bears and other wildlife.

But Vital Ground is not immune to the economic downturn, and we need your support now more than ever before. Can you volunteer to spread the word about our important conservation work in your community? With projects and partnerships queuing up, Vital Ground needs new supporters to help us seize these opportunities.

## *Can you help us spread the word?*

- Tell your friends. We will send you Vital Ground brochures and membership packets to distribute.
- Host a house party. Invite friends, family, and colleagues to a grizzly-themed party at your home. Use our new DVD, *The Strength of Connections*, to inform them about the bear's situation, hand out Vital Ground information, and encourage them to support us financially.

- Network online. Do you have a blog or are you on Facebook or Myspace? Post a link to Vital Ground's website on your page and ask your network to support Vital Ground's work.
- Be a Vital News distributor. We'll send you 25 copies or more of our *Vital News* so that you can place them in strategic places in your home town, like coffee shops, libraries, and community centers. Or you can distribute the PDF version to your friends electronically—simply go to our website to download the latest newsletter and post to your friends.
- Be a news outlet. Distribute Vital Ground press releases to your local newspapers and news stations, or ask your local radio station to air the Vital Ground public service announcement (see page 7).

However you wish to become involved, the staff of Vital Ground is here to help. We'll provide you with talking points and all the materials you need, from member forms, bumper stickers, and PowerPoint presentations, to door prizes from our Bear Mart store.

Please contact us if you'd like to help get the word out! 406-549-8650 or [development@vitalground.org](mailto:development@vitalground.org) We look forward to hearing from you. 🐾



## **Grizzly Blend Coffee by Montana Coffee Traders**

*Grizzly Blend is an earthy, full-bodied, medium-roasted blend. Vital Ground receives \$1.00 for each pound of Grizzly Blend purchased.*

*Purchase directly from Montana Coffee Traders by calling 1-800-345-5282 or visiting online at [www.coffeetraders.com](http://www.coffeetraders.com).*



## Spread Your Giving Wings

Many of our members and donors have inquired about alternate ways to support Vital Ground. While most folks prefer to send us donations directly via check or to give online using their credit card, there are other ways to contribute.

**Matching Gifts:** Matching gift programs enable employees and retirees to increase the value of their donations with a matching gift. Many companies will match your gift or your spouse's gift to charity, even if you are retired, through payroll or retirement income deduction.

Giving through these types of deductions is more effective than simply writing a check. Why? First, spreading out your

donation over the course of a year allows smaller, more manageable amounts to be taken out of your paycheck—this allows people to give more overall. Second, the money is deducted automatically without the employee or retiree ever touching it, so the decision to pledge only needs to be made once a year. Third, your employer's match doubles your gift. If you would like to multiply the impact of your gift to Vital Ground, ask your human resources department about their matching gifts program.

**Corporate Giving:** Corporations can designate a gift to develop a new Vital Ground program, underwrite a specific existing program, or provide much needed support for overall operations. If you are a business owner or an executive with a business, we would like to invite your company to be a Vital Ground Corporate Partner for Conservation. A corporate

partnership with Vital Ground is an excellent way to financially support our programs, while showing your company's commitment to a healthy environment through wildlife and habitat conservation.

**Foundation Grant-making:** If you serve on a foundation board that may be interested in granting to Vital Ground, or know someone who does, we would like to hear from you. Much like corporate gifts, foundation gifts can be designated to develop a new program, underwrite an existing program, or provide support for operations.

If you have any questions, particularly about corporate giving or foundation grant making, please contact us at 406-549-8650 or [development@vitalground.org](mailto:development@vitalground.org). 🐾

# BEAR MART

Now online at [www.vitalground.org](http://www.vitalground.org)

- Hats
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- Artwork
- Books
- Great Gift Ideas



To view our full line of merchandise and fine art, please visit Bear Mart online at [www.vitalground.org](http://www.vitalground.org)

No computer? No problem. Give us a call at 406-549-8650 and we will be happy to send you a merchandise flyer.

## **Business Partners for Conservation**

Individuals and businesses both large and small annually donate a portion of their profits, provide in-kind donations or offer services or expertise to help support Vital Ground's mission. More than ever, our business partnerships provide essential support in today's challenging economic climate.

Our business partners also benefit from working with us. They reach Vital Ground supporters through our website and publications, demonstrating that they care about North America's grizzlies, other wildlife and wild places.

If one of your business goals is to reach the diverse and well-educated conservation community, contact our development department today at 406-549-8650 or [development@vitalground.org](mailto:development@vitalground.org).

Thank you to our business partners, who recognize that sound environmental stewardship and good business are a powerful alliance.

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Grizzly Cove Greetings  
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Knight Inlet Lodge  
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## **Thanks to Our 2008 Foundation Supporters!**

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our 2008 foundation supporters. They play a key role in helping Vital Ground fund existing initiatives, develop new programs, and pioneer new methods of saving land and protecting habitat for grizzlies and other wildlife. Deep thanks to the following foundations for their generous support:

BP Foundation, Inc.

Camp Fire Conservation Fund

The Cinnabar Foundation

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Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative



Last October, the Cabinet-Yaak grizzly population in northwestern Montana suffered a terrible blow. For several years, biologists have been working to boost this perilously small population by relocating a few female grizzlies from the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) where numbers are robust. Candidate bears for this augmentation effort must be young females without cubs and have no history of conflicts with people. In 2008, two healthy grizzlies were successfully trapped in the NCDE and moved into the Cabinet Mountains. Both bears had GPS collars tracking their movements, and for about five days in October they traveled together. Then, on October 20, they split up—and within hours both were dead.

One female tried to cross the railway line near the town of Noxon, Montana and was struck by a train. The second was shot by a homeowner who reported the bear was getting into his garbage. Despite other successful relocations to the ecosystem in past years, this heart-breaking double loss shattered years of investment and hope.

Grizzly survival doesn't only hinge on nature's whims. Never mind the effort it takes to forage for the 20,000 to 30,000 calories a day required to fill a Rocky Mountain grizzly's rumbling tummy. Or the luck and risk involved in finding a mate, avoiding other bears, locating a secure winter den site, and raising cubs to maturity. Ultimately, a grizzly's greatest challenge is surviving all things human.

Although the high mountain fortresses, forest-clad slopes and trout-laden rivers of the Northern Rockies provide wild habitat and sanctuary to the great bear, people remain the number one cause of grizzly bear deaths in the region. The grizzly may be nature's reigning monarch, but wherever grizzlies encounter humans and their things, bears usually lose.

Last year was no different. Every year bear managers tally the causes of known and probable grizzly deaths. In 2008, humans were the cause of 9 of the 11 known mortalities within the NCDE, 2 of 3 bear deaths in the Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem, and 37 of 47 mortalities in the Yellowstone Ecosystem. In Alberta, 9 grizzlies died due to human-related fatalities, the worst year since 2005. Tragically, many of these losses could have been avoided.

Grizzlies wander widely to find enough food through the seasons. As some grizzly populations slowly expand, and as young bears range afar to find territory of their own, grizzlies show up in places where human and wild landscapes intersect. Foraging bears may be lured to picnic coolers in park campgrounds, and to pet food, orchards, beehives, livestock and garbage around homes, ranches and communities.

Bear managers focus much of their time and energy on educating the public in bear country about being bear safe—how to secure food and garbage, keep a clean camp, and protect gardens, crops and livestock. Yet every year, foraging bears come across the yummy pickings of careless humans: unsecured garbage cans, dog food left out on a cabin porch, bird feeders within easy reach. Bear managers then go to work to trap and relocate these bears, hoping to give them a chance to survive in wilder surroundings. Managers also make every attempt to trap the right bear by using cameras and DNA forensics to match bear suspects with the evidence at the “crime scene.”




Photo by Derek Reich [www.zooprax.com](http://www.zooprax.com)

*Emmet, a two-year old Montana grizzly captured after repeatedly getting into human foods. No longer a wild bear, Emmet now lives at Cheyenne Mountain Zoo in Colorado Springs, Colorado.*

Yet relocation of “problem” bears has a low success rate. Bears easily traverse great distances and they have as much desire to get home to familiar turf as you or I. Often, human foods are just too addictive—bears are soon lured back to the easy pickings and high-calorie rewards. Once a bear is habituated to human foods it also becomes less shy of people and managers have no choice but to euthanize a repeat offender. In the NCDE between 1980 and 2008, more bears lost their lives because of such conflicts than any other human-related cause. It's a double tragedy when grizzly moms teach their cubs to forage for the fast food at the local dumpster—those cubs will never learn to live as wild bears and few get the reprieve of living out their lives in a zoo or rescue center. When we lose female bears and their cubs, we lose the future of the grizzly population.

Bears must also hazard dangerous crossings. As the highways and railways in the Northern Rockies carry ever more traffic, each year we lose grizzlies as well as scores of other wild animals to vehicle and train collisions. In a few locations, wildlife underpasses are providing safe passage, but such crossings need to become the norm.

In addition, too many grizzlies lose their lives at the end of a gun barrel: in mistaken-identity by black bear hunters, in self-defense, or poached or shot maliciously. Montana bear hunters must now pass a bear identification test, but it requires changing attitudes to reduce poaching. For safe travel in bear country, bear managers strongly advocate bear deterrent pepper spray as the most effective self-defense. Recent research on 50 incidents involving brown bears in Alaska found that bear spray stopped undesirable behavior in 92% of the encounters, and of all people carrying bear spray, 98% were uninjured in close-range encounters. Bear managers themselves trust the use of bear spray over guns.

The tragic loss of grizzlies because of human behavior emphasizes just how important it is that we protect vital ground where the wild and human worlds intersect—those pieces of habitat that provide safe passage and sanctuary, and where the resident humans know how to be good neighbors to bears. 

—Christine Paige



*If a countryside can still support grizzlies, it will be good and whole  
and rich and wild and free enough to support all the other  
creatures struggling to hold on to a place in this world.*

—Douglas H. Chadwick

Photo by Derek Reich

*The Vital Ground Foundation's mission is to protect and restore North America's grizzly bear populations by conserving wildlife habitat for future generations. In support of this mission, we:*

- Protect lands that grizzlies need to survive, not only for bears but for all other species that share their world;
- Work where human impacts encroach on some of the wildest places left on the continent;
- Target projects that conserve critical lands, sustain habitat connections, and reduce conflicts between bears and people;
- Ground our projects on current science and strong partnerships.

*Please join us!  
As a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit, our success depends on you!*

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