The Vital Ground Foundation

Biennial Report
Published
October 2012

Where the Grizzly Can Walk, The Earth is Healthy and Whole

Vital Ground Board and Staff

(as of September 2012)

FOUNDERS

Doug and Lynne Seus
Bart The Bear™

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Robert Koons
Chair

Stuart D. Strahl, Ph.D.
Vice Chair

Charlie Eiseman
Treasurer

David Wesley, Ph.D.
Secretary

Sandy Becky
Jack Capp
Douglas Chadwick
Carolyn E. Dobbs, Ph.D.
Thomas Fey
Maureen Mayer
Lynne Seus
Sally O. Smyth
Debi Strong
John Swallow
Kelly Wilson
Meggen Wilson

HONORARY BOARD

Jennifer Aniston
Jeff Bridges
Susan Bridges
John Craighead, Ph.D.
Sir Anthony Hopkins
Jack Horner, Ph.D.
Thomas D. Mangelsen
Brad Pitt
Edward Zwick

TRUSTEE EMERITUS

Doug Seus

EX-OFFICIO

Sou Barrett
Grizzly Council Chair

ADVISORY BOARD

Larry Aumiller
Lyle Gold
Keith Johnson
Colleen Matt
Theresa McCall
Nancy McLaughlin, J.D.
Chris Morgan
Jack Noll
Michael Proctor, Ph.D.
Derek Reich
Penny Ronning

STAFF

Gary J. Wolfe, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Ryan Lutey, J.D.
Director of Lands

Mark Brennan
Director of Development

Kevin Rhoades
Communications Director

Shannon Foley
Office Manager

Shelly Wear
Administrative Assistant

AMBASSADORS

Bart The Bear 2™
Honey-Bump The Bear™
Tank The Bear™

Cover photo by Ray Rafiti

Welcome!

The Vital Ground Foundation prides itself in being a lean, yet highly effective organization dedicated to one mission—*ensuring the recovery and long-term survival of grizzly bears, together with the many native species that share their range, through the protection and restoration of core habitats and landscape linkages.*

The past two years have been excellent ones for Vital Ground. With the assistance provided by some fortuitous gifts and bequests, we made significant progress toward our mission. We acquired our fourth property at Bismark Meadows, a key step in our long-term plan to permanently protect crucial core grizzly bear habitat in North Idaho; negotiated new conservation easement agreements to protect grizzlies and their habitat in Montana's Swan Valley; negotiated three Forest Legacy Program conservation easements protecting a 720-acre wildlife corridor in the Bane Creek area of North Idaho; acquired our first property under the auspices of the Right Place™ Campaign to protect a key grizzly movement corridor in the Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem of northwest Montana; and launched the Gobi Bear Initiative to help save the last remaining Gobi grizzlies. While accomplishing all this for grizzlies and other wildlife, we were also able to build our capacity and increase our net assets by 88 percent.

One of the highlights of the 2010-2011 biennium was the celebration of Vital Ground's 20th anniversary in September 2010 in Park City, Utah. The event was an inspiring gathering of 200-plus Vital Ground friends and supporters from 23 states. The event raised more than $220,000 and helped cap Vital Ground's Strength of Connections Campaign™, allowing us to acquire the strategic 327-acre property at Bismark Meadows.

To date, in cooperation with our conservation partners, Vital Ground has helped to conserve and restore nearly 600,000 acres of crucial wildlife habitat in Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, British Columbia and Alaska. Make no mistake, however; grizzly bears (and most other large carnivores) are still at risk from human activities that casually or intentionally threaten their survival.

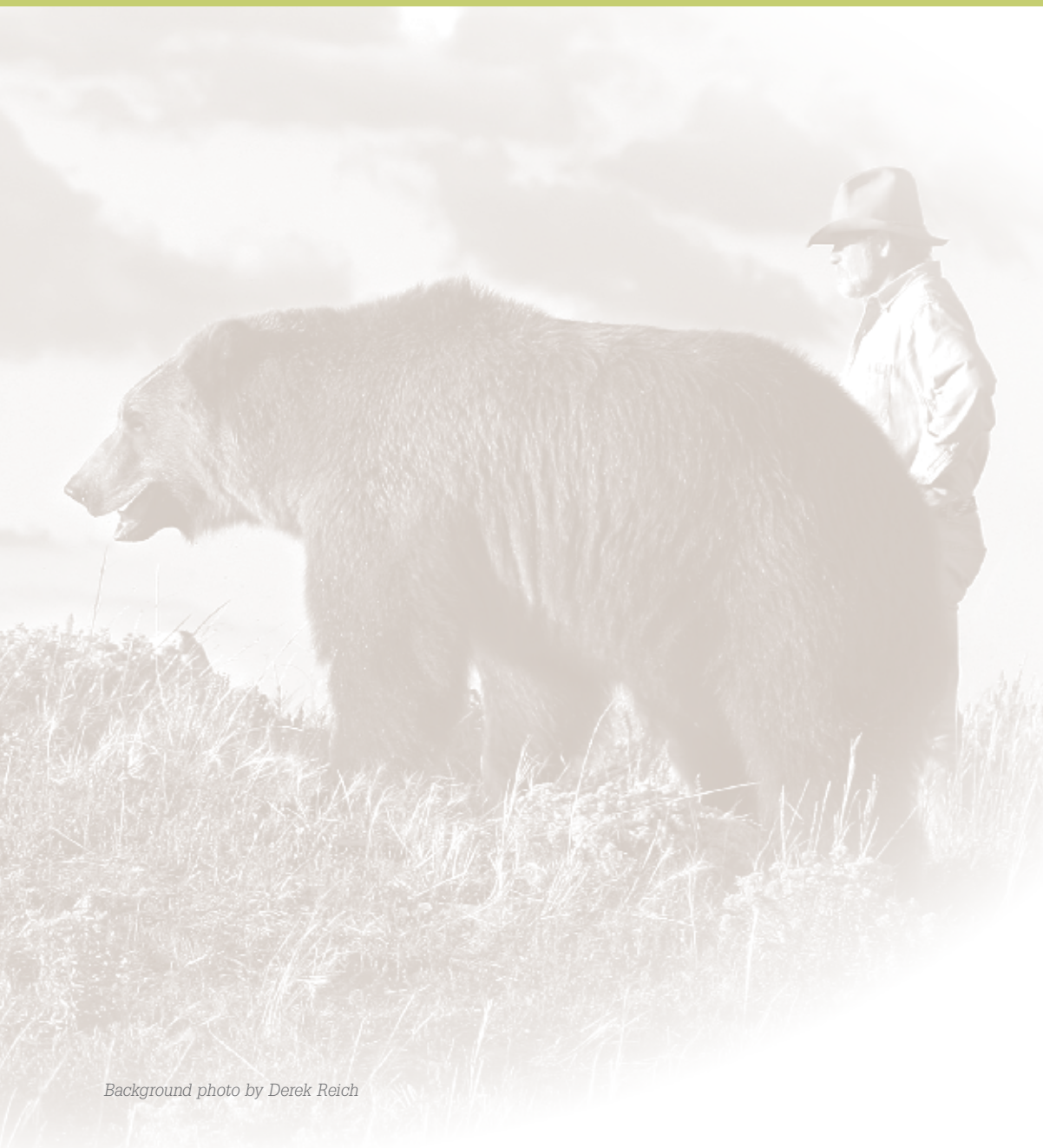
Vital Ground's staff and trustees remain committed to operating a lean organization focused on enhancing and preserving habitat and educating the public about threats and opportunities. Your continued support gives us the confidence to continue to reach for solutions that might otherwise be beyond our grasp. We pledge to put every dollar to work as efficiently and effectively as possible. Thank you for your support!

Yours in Conservation,

Robert W. Koons
Chair, Board of Trustees

Gary J. Wolfe
Executive Director

Our Vision



Background photo by Derek Reich

Vital Ground works to ensure the recovery and long-term survival of grizzly bears, together with the many native species that share their range, through the protection and restoration of core habitats and landscape linkages.

Our mission is to protect and restore North America's grizzly bear populations by conserving wildlife habitat for future generations. We protect crucial lands that grizzlies need to survive—not only for the great bears themselves, but for birds and butterflies, elk, lynx, trout and all the other creatures that share their world.

Vital Ground believes the grizzly bear, as an umbrella species, is nature's barometer of a healthy and complete ecosystem. Because a grizzly's home range covers several hundred square miles—from alpine meadows to valley bottoms—protecting grizzly habitat benefits entire plant and animal communities in the wildest, most scenic places left on the continent.

Grizzly and other brown bear populations carry on in some of the continent's last wilderness ecosystems. But roads and rapid development on private lands both inside and near these ecosystems are fracturing many once-open landscapes.

Habitat links between these wild grizzly sanctuaries—private lands that provide food, shelter and security for seasonal foraging and movement—are the focal point of grizzly survival and recovery. Today many of these lands still feature streamside willows and cottonwoods, pastures, grasslands, wet meadows, clear waters, and conifer forests—habitat for innumerable species. Tomorrow, if not protected, they could be peppered with homes, roads, and other developments that would put grizzlies at greater risk.

This is where Vital Ground targets its resources and efforts. Acre by acre, we protect the jigsaw puzzle pieces of habitat that maintain the lifelines between grizzly ecosystems. Lifelines that will help sustain bears and everything else that would thrive in grizzly country.

One Bear's Legacy

Vital Ground evolved from a unique relationship between a man and a bear. In 1977, a Kodiak brown bear cub born in captivity arrived in the lives of Doug and Lynne Seus, professional animal trainers. Dubbing him Bart, the Seuses raised the cub from a six-pound ball of fuzz to a 1,500-pound adult bear and trained him for work in the film business. Bart quickly became a beloved member of the Seus family and developed a lifelong bond of trust and loyalty with Doug.

Bart loved the applause of film crews as much as his salmon and blueberries, and he eventually appeared in more than 35 films, including *Legends of the Fall*, *The Edge* and *The Bear*. "For 23 years he took us on grand adventures—from the majestic peaks of the Austrian Alps and the Alaska wilds, to the bejeweled backstage of the Academy Awards," recalls Lynne.

Inspired to act on behalf of Bart's wild relatives, in 1990 the Seuses launched The Vital Ground Foundation with an initial purchase of 240 acres of prime grizzly bear habitat in Montana—habitat that adjoins other protected land along the eastern front of the Rocky Mountains. The Seuses felt that Bart, as a member of a species truly symbolic of wilderness, could deliver a powerful message in support of land conservation. Bart took on an important new role as ambassador for Vital Ground. Until his death in 2000, his public appearances with Doug and Lynne sought to convey the urgent predicament of our rapidly diminishing natural areas, while promoting a message of hope that we might become better stewards of these great lands.

Over the past 22 years, Vital Ground has helped protect and enhance nearly 600,000 acres of wildlife habitat. Bart had no choice but to live his life in captivity but he left a legacy that allows many of his wild brothers and sisters to roam free.

Photo by Derek Reich

Vital Ground will remain the finest thing we have ever done with our lives.

—Doug and Lynne Seus, Founders of Vital Ground

Making Connections: Conserving Vital Ground

Vital Ground protects critical grizzly bear habitat through cooperative conservation partnerships. We focus on strategically located lands where conservation values transcend property boundaries. On private properties, we partner with willing landowners to protect vital habitat through conservation easements and fee title acquisitions, either by purchase or donation. Vital Ground also participates in selected projects on public lands designed to reduce conflicts between bears and people, improve habitat quality, protect or enhance resident populations, or increase the land's carrying capacity for grizzly bears.

Vital Ground works wherever there is an opportunity to protect habitat for grizzlies, but we direct particular attention to private lands that serve as connections between grizzly ecosystems, special foraging areas or seasonal bear habitat—lifelines that grizzlies, and everything else in grizzly country, depend upon. Much of our attention is devoted to projects in the Rocky Mountain states of Montana, Idaho and Wyoming, yet we have also made important contributions to habitat projects in Alaska and British Columbia. By directing Vital Ground's resources toward protecting the crucial links that connect grizzly ecosystems, we hope to help sustain grizzly populations from Yellowstone to Canada and Alaska.

Vital Ground conducts all of its activities in accordance with the Land Trust Alliance's Standards and Practices, the guiding principles of the land trust community. Our strategy is directed by the best scientific information available concerning grizzly bear biology, habitat requirements and conservation strategies. Vital Ground does not engage in partisan politics. Rather, we seek practical, local solutions that allow people, grizzlies, and other wildlife to coexist.

Partnerships are essential to our success. Rapidly rising land values throughout grizzly country pose ever-greater fundraising challenges for habitat conservation. We collaborate with landowners, state and federal agencies and other nonprofit groups to leverage funds and build cooperative conservation projects. Working with our many partners, Vital Ground has so far helped conserve nearly 600,000 acres of wildlife habitat.

As the pressures of rural development, resource extraction, and climate change continue to threaten wild places, Vital Ground remains committed to securing habitat that the Great Bear and other wildlife can rely upon.

If we can enable the long-term survival and growth of grizzly bear populations, we can help sustain North America's wild heritage for our children and many future generations.

Photo by Randy Stekly

Direct acquisition of land and conservation easements are becoming increasingly important tools for wildlife conservation in North America, and Vital Ground plays an important role in this effort for grizzly bears.

Michael Proctor, Ph.D.
Canadian Project Leader
Trans-border Grizzly Bear Project

Where Grizzlies Walk

Photo by Ray Rafiti

Before European settlement, 50,000 to 100,000 grizzly bears ranged from Mexico to Alaska, across North America's vast prairies, wetlands, forests and mountainsides. Also known as the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), the grizzly is considered a keystone species that influences the diversity of other species in the ecosystems it inhabits. As a top predator, the grizzly affects the number and distribution of prey species and other predators. Foraging on berries and herbs, bears disperse seeds and therefore promote a variety of plant life. As grizzlies dig for tubers, insects and rodents, they loosen topsoil and help renew nutrients. And where coastal grizzlies dine on salmon, they spread nitrogen and other marine elements well beyond streams into upland habitats.

Due to the grizzly's extensive home range and need for wild land, undisturbed denning habitat, and abundant native berry crops and prey—from grubs and ground squirrels to deer and elk—the condition of a grizzly population is nature's barometer of a healthy and complete ecosystem.

Today, approximately 1,500 grizzlies remain in the lower 48 states, refugees of a long history of persecution and the sweep of settlement and development that consumed 98 percent of the bear's historic range in the contiguous states. In 1975, the grizzly was listed under the Endangered Species Act as "threatened" in the U.S. south of Canada. The populations that remain survive in five distinct ecosystems, sustained by wild habitat in our national parks, national forests and wilderness areas:

- Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem
- Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem
- Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem
- Selkirk Ecosystem
- Northern Cascades Ecosystem

The Yellowstone and Northern Continental Divide grizzly populations are currently the most robust of all the populations in the lower 48, having grown steadily through the benefit of years of cooperative agency management and investment in recovery. These two populations are slowly expanding their ranges out of protected areas and increasingly into landscapes with private lands.

The Yellowstone grizzly was briefly removed from protection under the Endangered Species Act, having met all of the criteria for population recovery. However, controversy continues to simmer over threats to the Yellowstone population. Some conservationists have voiced concern over the status of grizzly food sources in the ecosystem, particularly the widespread decline of whitebark pine

due to blister rust disease, which may be linked to climate change. Subsequently, a federal judge reversed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's delisting decision and the population is once again listed as threatened.

Regardless of legal status, the long-term survival of grizzlies in these ecosystems will depend on secure habitat outside protected parks and wilderness areas as fluctuating habitat conditions and expanding populations push bears into historic ranges to seek landscapes with abundant food resources.

Straddling the Montana-Idaho border, the Selway-Bitterroot Ecosystem is designated as a sixth recovery zone. Although grizzlies were once widespread and abundant in the region, for 60 years there was no verified evidence of the Great Bear in the Selway-Bitterroot. That changed in 2007 when a grizzly was mistakenly shot by a black bear hunter in the northern Bitterroot Mountains. DNA analysis revealed that this bear had traveled from the Selkirk Mountains, more than 140 air miles northwest of the Bitterroots, spotlighting the potential for grizzlies to reclaim historic range and the urgent need to protect habitat links between populations.

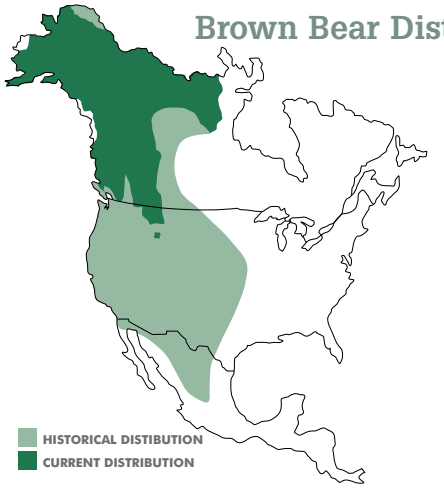
Despite a core of protected lands in each of these ecosystems, the long-term persistence of the grizzly depends on plenty of room to roam. Connections between these ecosystems and with populations in Canada are vital to the bear's survival.

Today, some of the most important linkage areas and most productive seasonal feeding habitats for grizzlies lie on private ground.

Lands along streams, valley bottoms, and in lower elevations provide essential spring and summer range and corridors for movement. Yet people also love these special places for their stunning beauty, abundant wildlife and recreational opportunities. Development is consuming lowland wildlife habitats at a staggering rate, isolating grizzly ecosystems from one another and jeopardizing the enduring survival of these populations.

Alaska remains the largest stronghold for the Great Bear in the U.S., with an estimated 25,000 to 39,000 brown bears—about 95 percent of the U.S. population (Miller and Schoen 1999). Yet as the state continues to develop, humans and bears come into increasing conflict over vital habitat. Even Alaska's wilds are not limitless, and habitat conservation is becoming ever more important for brown bears to continue to thrive in the land of the midnight sun.

Historic and Current Brown Bear Distribution



Grizzly Recovery Ecosystems

Bear Tracks: Highlights of Our 2010–2011 Conservation Achievements

Vital Ground continued good work for wildlife in 2010 and 2011, keeping intact some important movement corridors for U.S. grizzly populations and other key species. During the 2010–2011 biennium, Vital Ground helped permanently protect 1,200 acres of habitat, while launching a new initiative to help a truly endangered desert bear. Here are some highlights.

Photo by Linda Lantzy

SELKIRK GRIZZLY BEAR HABITAT CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

1 *Protecting Bismark Meadows: A Spring Smorgasbord for Grizzlies*

In December 2010, Vital Ground scored a veritable grand slam for grizzlies when it completed the purchase of its fourth property at Bismark Meadows in northern Idaho, an important piece of Vital Ground's Selkirk Grizzly Bear Habitat Conservation Initiative. This 327-acre acquisition was the second-largest property Vital Ground has purchased to date and consolidated three previously purchased properties into a contiguous holding of just over 492 acres. The land deal also included a conservation covenant that limits subdivision and development on an additional 20 acres at the edge of the meadows to help protect the safe haven that grizzlies seek here each spring.

Collectively, Vital Ground's Bismark Meadows properties contain several stands of wetland forest and an extensive wetland meadow fed by nearly a mile of Reeder Creek. Landowners had worked with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service for several years to restore the wetland to its former glory of lush meadows and native wildlife, including grizzlies, and several rare and sensitive plant species. For more than a century 80 percent of the land had been used for agriculture and livestock grazing.

The Bismark Meadows floodplain is now dominated by grasses and sedges—a favorite food source for grizzlies when they emerge from hibernation. Each spring,

several grizzlies from the nearby Selkirk Mountains find their way to the meadows to graze the protein-rich greenery, then move back into higher elevations as snows retreat and mountain berries ripen.

Vital Ground is working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to quell invasive plants and restore and enhance the native vegetation at Bismark Meadows as the two groups work toward the long-term protection of these lush meadows.

Land purchases like Bismark Meadows include a combination of conscientious landowners, dedicated staff and various conservation stakeholders to complete a transaction to protect these important parcels of land. This purchase was made possible in large part by a three-year bridge loan from the Resources Legacy Fund (RLF)—a public charity focused on conserving key lands that possess exceptional biological and agricultural values and local community support for conservation. A generous bequest from the estate of Michael Downs allowed Vital Ground to repay a significant portion of the RLF loan. The initial success of the project hinged on a cornerstone grant by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation via The Nature Conservancy's Northwest Wildlife Conservation Initiative, which directed nearly $200,000 to Vital Ground's last three acquisitions at Bismark Meadows—an investment that helped leverage more than $1.04 million in habitat conservation to create a lasting legacy for the Selkirk grizzlies.

We wish to thank the following donors for their generous gifts in support of Bismark Meadows: William H. Donner Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, First Interstate Bank, First Interstate BancSystem Foundation, Richard K. & Shirley S. Hemingway Foundation, Johnson Family Foundation, Oberweiler Foundation, Qureshi Family Foundation, Resources Legacy Fund, Shared Earth Foundation, Wiancko Charitable Trust and numerous individual donors.

Photo by Linda Lantzy

Vital Ground staff photos

MONTANA'S SWAN RIVER VALLEY

2 *Conservation Easements at Windfall Creek Increase Grizzly Habitat Corridors*

Two conservation easements in northwest Montana's Swan River Valley will protect 80 acres of core grizzly habitat, as well as many sensitive species including the Columbia spotted frog and wild lady slipper orchid, thanks to the generosity and foresight of the second- and third-generation owners of two properties on Windfall Creek. The properties sit adjacent to Flathead National Forest lands and to other private lands that were protected previously by conservation easements. (A Vital Ground grant to the Montana Land Reliance in 2004 helped secure a conservation easement on property adjacent to these new easements.) The new projects—along with four other conservation easements Vital Ground holds in the valley—all allow wildlife to more easily travel between the Bob Marshall and Mission Mountain Wilderness areas without the threat of development to fragment it.

These two Windfall Creek easements encompass numerous glacial potholes, as well as mixed forest and streamside riparian areas along the creek, all of which provide habitat for a wide range of wildlife from deer, elk and moose to pine martens, flying squirrels, waterfowl and songbirds.

In addition to the landowners' generous donations of the easements, the Cinnabar Foundation and Montana Coffee Traders provided funding for transactional costs and the long-term stewardship and monitoring of the easements.

CABINET-PURCELL-SELKIRK WILDLIFE LINKAGE INITIATIVE

3 *First Project Protects Priority Grizzly Habitat on Yaak Mountain*

In July 2011, Vital Ground celebrated its first acquisition for the Cabinet-Purcell-Selkirk Wildlife Linkage Initiative—the Yaak Mountain property, 71 acres of lush meadows, hills and forest lands providing important habitat for grizzlies and other wildlife near the Canada-U.S. border northwest of Troy, Montana. Vital Ground and the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Y2Y) launched this collaborative effort in 2008, deeming the Yaak Mountain parcel the top priority for protection after focal species research and computer modeling identified this area as significant linkage habitat. The Cabinet-Purcell-Selkirk Initiative is aimed at protecting dwindling habitat corridors between U.S. and Canada grizzly bear populations.

The Yaak Mountain purchase ensures the property will never be commercially or residentially developed and will connect

relatively unfragmented grizzly habitat in Canada to habitat in the Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone—a 2,600 square-mile area delineated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) where the threatened grizzly bear population is estimated to be no more than 40 animals south of the Canada border. The interchange with more genetically and demographically robust grizzly bear populations in Canada is essential for preserving the viability of populations in the lower 48 states.

Purchase of the Yaak Mountain property is the result of several years of planning and analysis by a partnership consisting of representatives from the USFWS's Grizzly Bear Recovery Office, Y2Y, Trans-border Grizzly Bear Project, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and Vital Ground. The property serves as an important safe link for grizzlies traversing Yaak Mountain and across the river and highway into National Forest lands. Additionally, the property provides low-elevation, seasonal habitat for deer, elk, moose and other wildlife. Vital Ground is now focusing on the stewardship and restoration of the parcel—such as noxious weed treatments, replanting native vegetation and removing abandoned structures—to benefit wildlife.

The Yaak Mountain purchase is the cornerstone of The Right Place™ Campaign, a multi-year outreach and fundraising approach supporting the Cabinet-Purcell-Selkirk Wildlife Linkage Initiative. The campaign aims to protect the wildlife linkage areas that will allow grizzly bears and other wildlife to naturally move south from Canada into the uninhabited Bitterroot Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone in Central Idaho.

Vital Ground wishes to thank the following donors for their generous support of the Cabinet-Purcell-Selkirk Wildlife Linkage Initiative and Yaak Mountain property acquisition: Y2Y, Wildlife Conservation Society, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, William H. Donner Foundation, Wilburforce Foundation via the Heart of the Rockies Initiative, Qureshi Family Foundation, Johnson Family Foundation, Montana Coffee Traders, Chicago Zoological Society, Brookfield Chapter of the American Association of Zookeepers, the Cinnabar Foundation and numerous individual contributors.

Vital Ground's work is focused, targeted, and absolutely essential to achieving real solutions for wildlife in the Northern Rockies. By protecting key habitats that form essential linkages, they are delivering real conservation outcomes for grizzly bears and other wide-ranging species.

Carly Vynne, Ph.D.
Director, Wildlife and Habitat Conservation
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Vital Ground staff photo

Photo by Sam Testa

CABINET-PURCELL-SELKIRK WILDLIFE LINKAGE INITIATIVE

4 *Paradise Not Lost: 720 Acres Permanently Protected in North Idaho's Bane Creek*

A four-year project initiated by three landowners and supported by several groups and individuals in North Idaho came to fruition in the fall of 2011 when Vital Ground shepherded an effort to permanently protect 720 acres with conservation easements. In late 2007, three families—Greg and Alicia Johnson, Tom and Mary Mackey, and Sam and Carolyn Testa, adjoining property owners in Bane Creek—contacted Vital Ground with a desire to protect their properties' traditional forest uses and important wildlife habitat amidst a rapidly growing rural community.

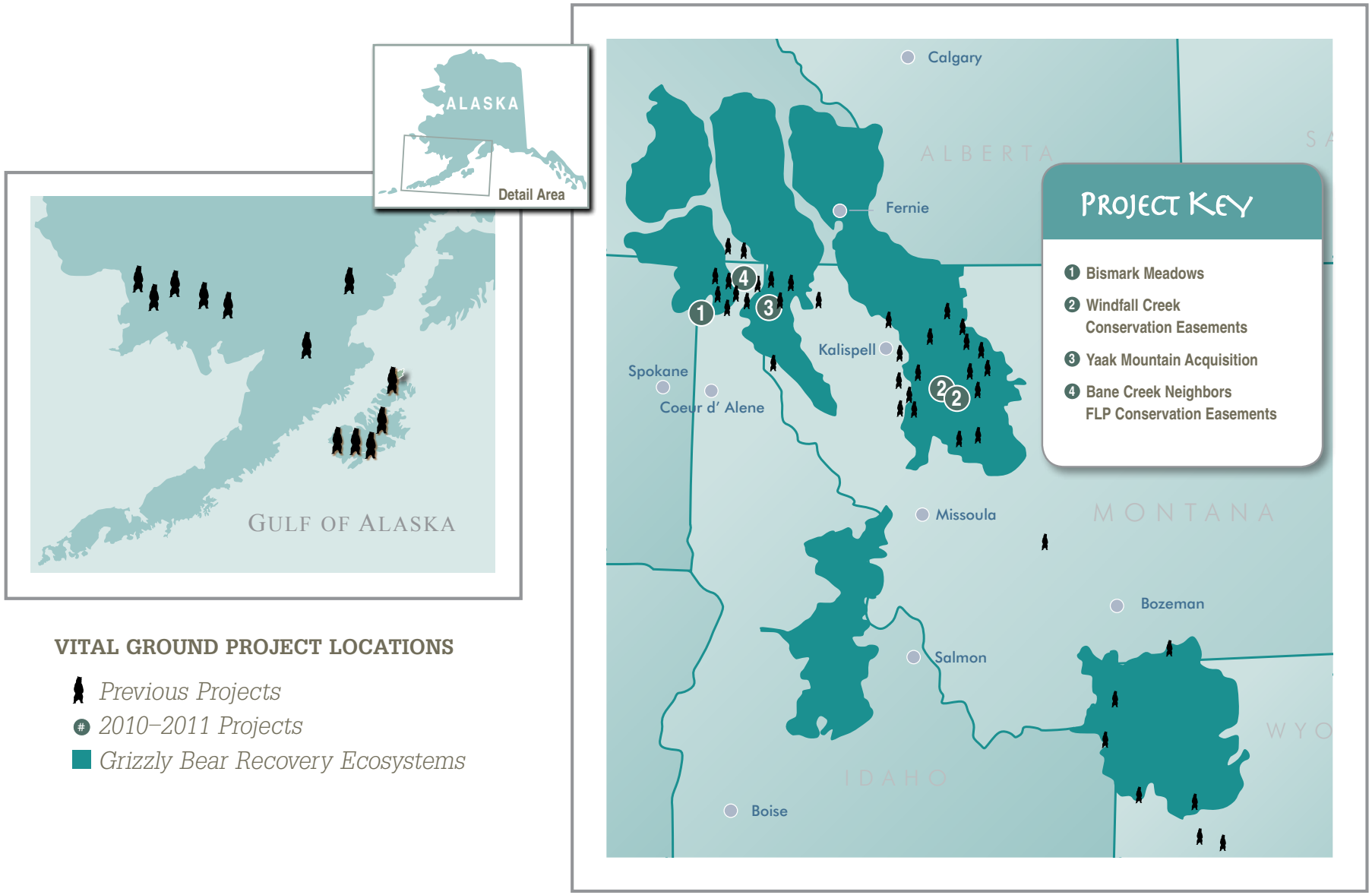
Vital Ground leveraged partnerships with the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) and the U.S. Forest Service to secure permanent conservation easements on the three adjacent properties—720 acres of prime agricultural and timber land between the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones. The acquisition was finalized in September 2011 through Idaho's Forest Legacy Program (FLP), an effort administered in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and state governments to protect privately owned, environmentally important forests.

"The greatest threat to wildlife is loss of habitat; large undeveloped tracts of their winter range in the valleys and benches are vital for their survival," said Sam Testa, owner of one of the three Bane Creek properties that were protected. "This conservation easement will give the animals a safe haven forever."

The land's blend of agricultural fields and timbered canyons are natural corridors for elk, white-tailed deer and moose to move from summer to winter range across the Kootenai Valley between the Selkirk and Purcell mountain ranges, while its low-elevation habitat provides critical winter range. The easements also secured scenic benefits: the properties are located along the International Selkirk Loop, which is designated as an All American Road under the National Scenic Byways Program.

Diverse support from several groups—including the Kootenai Valley Resources Initiative, Boundary County Commissioners, Idaho Fish and Game, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho and The Nature Conservancy of Idaho—helped move the project to its positive conclusion. Thanks to the U.S. Forest Service's continued support, the

(continued on page 14)



VITAL GROUND PROJECT LOCATIONS

- *Previous Projects*
- *2010–2011 Projects*
- *Grizzly Bear Recovery Ecosystems*

multi-year effort was Vital Ground's second project to secure funding originating from the USDA's Forest Legacy Program.

"Protecting productive forestlands from inappropriate subdivision and development prevents key wildlife habitat from disappearing entirely and helps reduce the potential for wildlife to come into conflict with people," explained Ryan Lutey, Vital Ground's director of lands.

Keeping the properties intact will further Vital Ground's Cabinet-Purcell-Selkirk Wildlife Habitat Linkage Initiative. Bane and Fleming Creek canyons represent one of the few areas between Bonners Ferry and the Canadian border that provides contiguous forest cover between the Purcell Mountain range and the Kootenai River. Given the relatively small sizes of the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak grizzly bear populations and the limited size of their respective recovery zones, it is important to protect all opportunities for genetic and demographic flow between the two populations. The Bane Creek neighbors' conservation easements will ensure that the Cabinet-Yaak grizzlies have a little more space to roam freely for years to come.

5 VITAL GROUND LAUNCHES GOBI BEAR INITIATIVE

There's more to the story of grizzlies than most of us are aware, for populations of this species—Ursus arctos, also commonly called the brown bear—can be found outside North America from the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido, west to Scandinavia and all the way south to India. Some hold out in the mountains of Spain, France, Iran, Syria, Pakistan, western China, and a number of other countries across Eurasia.

It is a tribute to these bears' toughness, intelligence, and adaptability that they have survived within such a wide array of landscapes and climates. Even so, few people would ever picture these animals in the Gobi Desert, a vast, unforgiving realm of stone and sand where temperatures hit 115 degrees Fahrenheit or more in summer, minus 40 Fahrenheit in winter, and just 2 to 8 inches of rain falls annually. After all, in Mongolian, gobi means "waterless place."

Two Vital Ground volunteers, Douglas H. Chadwick, a wildlife biologist and founding board member, and ecologist Mike Proctor, advisory board member, recently accompanied scientists in Mongolia on an expedition led by Harry Reynolds, a former Alaska Department of Fish and Game bear biologist and two-term president of the International Bear Association.

"In addition to capturing two grizzlies and placing GPS satellite radio collars on them, the crew observed a free-roaming bear for hours and identified perhaps ten others from the latest photos taken by automatic cameras set up at strategic sites," observed Chadwick. "These aren't large numbers, but they are important. You see, fewer than

Fewer than 50 Gobi bears still exist, and the actual number may be just two to three dozen.

—Douglas H. Chadwick, Vital Ground founding board member

50 Gobi bears still exist, and the actual number may be just two to three dozen."

Now, researchers have established a new nonprofit organization, the Gobi Bear Fund, to make sure these hungry desert-dwelling bears on the outermost edge of existence are being fed, protected and studied. To help support the work of this new nonprofit, Vital Ground launched the Gobi Bear Initiative in the fall of 2011.

"This is a departure from Vital Ground's traditional mission of conserving and restoring grizzly bear habitat in North America," said Vital Ground Executive Director Gary Wolfe. "But this is such a significant opportunity to make a contribution toward protecting an entire breed of grizzly—one virtually unknown to the world and at great risk of extinction—that we feel we must take action."

The Gobi Bear Initiative will raise funds for four primary needs: 1) supplemental food with improved nutritional content for the bears, 2) fuel for rangers to patrol, monitor wildlife and distribute grain pellets to the oases, 3) satellite radio collars and other scientific equipment for tracking the bears and analyzing habitat and 4) university scholarships for ten students from five local communities for attending a natural resource program. The Gobi Bear Fund outlined an annual budget of $30,000 to finance these projects.

Several generous contributors have stepped forth to ensure a successful conservation program in Mongolia. In their usual enthusiastic manner, Doug and Lynne Seus made the inaugural donation establishing Vital Ground's Gobi Bear Initiative. Wolverine study volunteer Dave Murray soon followed, as did generous contributions from several Vital Ground trustees, individual donors, the Augustyn Foundation, and the HSUS Wildlife Land Trust.

Photos by Gobi Bear Project, Cori Lausen & Hunter J. Causey

Celebrating 20 Years

"Twenty years ago, Vital Ground was one 240-acre property in grizzly country on the Rocky Mountain Front in Montana, an extra phone line in our front room and a brown spiral notebook where donations were recorded with a yellow no. 2 pencil..." recalled co-founders Doug and Lynne Seus. "No office, no paid staff, no computers, little money and one property. We fell down six times and got up seven...

Photo by Jed Seus

"Fast forward 20 years: Vital Ground now boasts an amazingly brilliant staff, a world-class board of trustees, a real office in Old Fort Missoula and nearly 600,000 acres of protected habitat. Through tough times Vital Ground has survived. Tough times don't last—tough people do."

As with many conservation organizations, Vital Ground started with a few dedicated folks, a lot of passion and little else than a vision of what they knew could be—what should be; no, what must be done. And today the organization has two decades of everlasting conservation work behind it and still more important work to do in grizzly country.

"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."

Those words, from Douglas H. Chadwick, one of Vital Ground's founding board members, capture the essence of Vital Ground's mission. Through the efforts of Vital Ground and the generous support of thousands of like-minded conservationists, nearly 600,000 acres of wildlife habitat—an area equal to about half the size of Glacier National Park—has been conserved or restored in North America during this organization's first 20 years.

More than 200 Vital Ground friends from 23 states—and one famous grizzly bear—gathered in Park City, Utah, for a special day-long 20th anniversary celebration in September 2010 to commemorate all that has happened since that spiral-bound notebook and no. 2 pencil recorded its first donation. After an informal social designed for his two-legged supporters, Bart the Bear 2 (aka Little Bart) wowed the appreciative crowd with trainer and Vital Ground co-founder Doug Seus to show them what a goodwill ambassador and his human does to bring attention to the needs of the grizzly and the other wildlife that call grizzly country home. Throughout the day and evening and two different venues, guests were treated to a live and silent auction, a Native American tribute to the Great Bear, dinner, and a 20-year retrospective of stories and photos.

In a special tribute, Vital Ground honored founders Doug and Lynne Seus for their vision and lifelong commitment to grizzly conservation. Doug Chadwick presented the Seuses with an original painting by Montana artist Rocky Hawkins symbolically depicting Doug, Lynne and the Great Bear. The couple's children, Sausha and Jed, who grew up knowing everything grizzly, made the evening extra special with their own tribute to their parents, recapping the valuable lessons and values passed on to them—and all of us—from their parents.

"Mom and Dad," Sausha said, "Twenty years ago, in order to start Vital Ground, you purchased the first piece of grizzly bear habitat with all your savings. In doing so, you made the statement that fulfilling a purpose higher than yourself should be the biggest gem in your crown. Your action in this first purchase taught me that to choose something larger than yourself is the first step in awareness one must take in order to contribute in the greater whole of existence. Personally, I view Vital Ground as a piece of history and as an extraordinary heritage.... It has allowed me an exclusive window in which to observe why Vital Ground is so imperative, especially at this time. For without nature and the animals, humanity will indeed become spiritually bankrupt."

The 20th anniversary celebration stood as a resounding success in raising funds for more on-the-ground work ($220,000), but mostly for marking an important milestone in Vital Ground's history and pausing just long enough to take a deep breath to recognize the continued importance of this small but mighty organization that has yet to hit full stride. Indeed, our work has only scratched the surface, and with the help of our many present and future passionate supporters, we are poised to do even greater things in the next two decades.

Photos courtesy of Mike Flaherty, Jim and Shelly Moloney and Terry and Dan Marin.

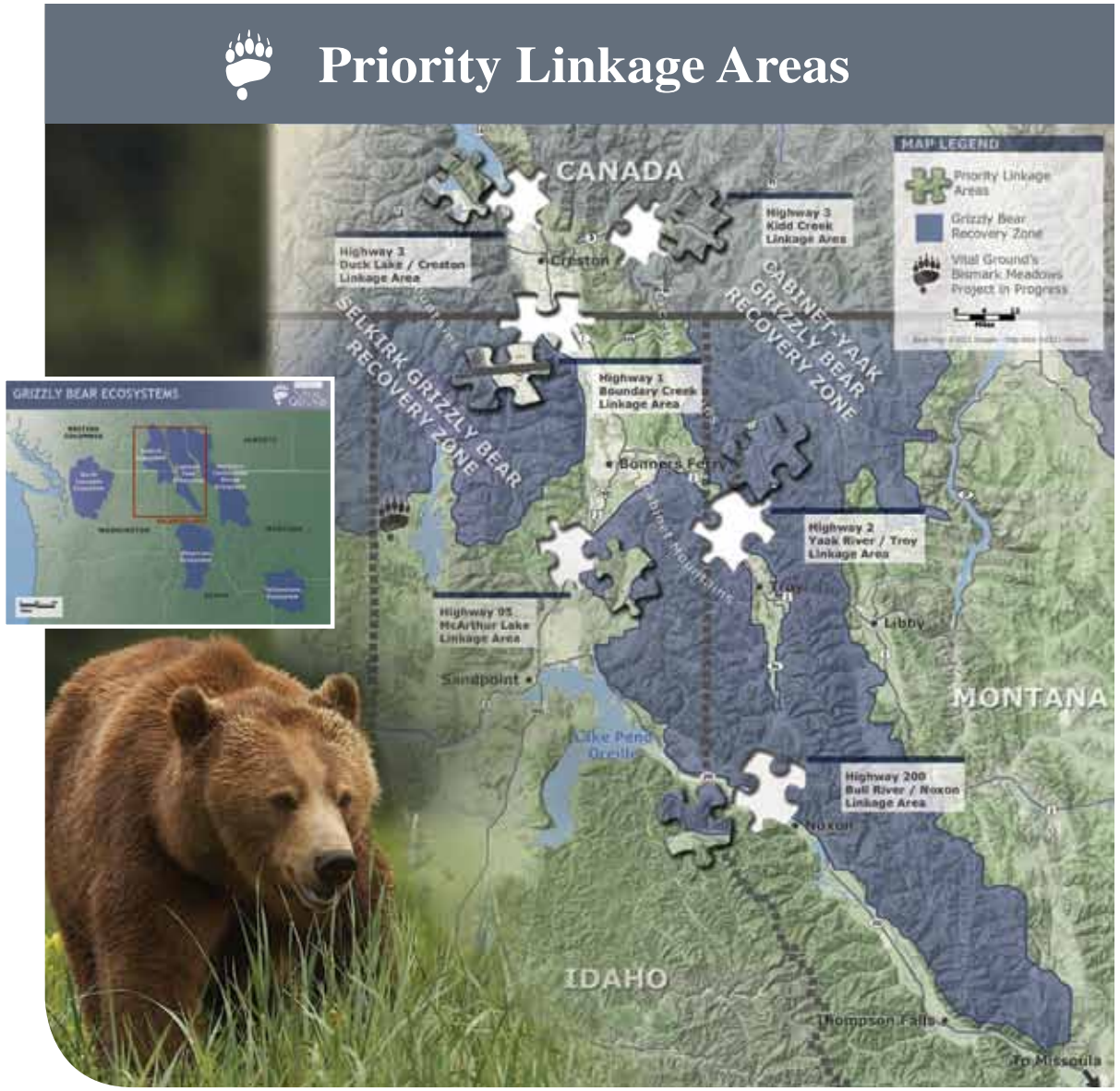
The Right Place™ Campaign

In the United States we are fortunate to have millions of acres of public lands under relatively good conservation protections. In the northern Rockies these areas provide strongholds for grizzlies and other wildlife. But separating these core habitats are strips of privately-owned lands containing homes, ranches, businesses and transportation corridors. The increased development and traffic in these areas, which are often along rivers and valleys, disrupt wildlife movement across the landscape.

In 2011, Vital Ground launched The Right Place™ Campaign to draw attention to the crucial role that small, strategically-located parcels of private land play in conserving grizzly bear habitat. By focusing on the manageable goal of securing smaller key parcels of land in the right places, Vital Ground and our donors can make a huge impact on landscape-scale wildlife conservation efforts.

The Right Place™ Campaign likens our work to putting together a puzzle—of grizzly habitat. Putting the right puzzle pieces in place links together vital ground—sections of land critical to allowing grizzlies free range. We use the puzzle graphic at right to convey the image of those acres that are in exactly the *right place*.

One of the early successes of the Campaign was to provide significant funding for the acquisition of the 71-acre Yaak Mountain property in northwest Montana. A webinar for Grizzly Council members in connection with the Campaign provided a thorough overview of the property's significance; they in turn, provided the last bundle of funds needed to complete the Yaak Mountain purchase. The Right Place™ Campaign will continue to be a priority in 2012 and beyond as Vital Ground identifies and protects additional strategically- located habitats.



Bear photo by Jamie Scarrow

The Silvertip Legacy Circle

The Silvertip Legacy Circle recognizes those donors who make a lasting commitment to Vital Ground by pledging their support through wills, trusts, charitable gift annuities, or other planned gifts. By doing so, Circle members ensure future income to Vital Ground for projects that will enhance the survival of North America's grizzly populations and biodiversity for generations to come.

Our Silvertip Legacy Circle members are:

Laura V. and Michael E. Alverson
Lynn Anderson
E. Stormy Apgar
Dan and Loraine Barnes
Richard Boughton
Larry Burke
Nazario and Sabina C'de Baca
Douglas A. Cluff (deceased)
Colleen Coghlan
Michael Downs (deceased)
Patricia Falabella
Charlotte Heldstab
John Herklotz
Robert and Jan Koons
Melia Lewis
Jack David Maertzweiler (deceased)
Mimi McMillen
Banu Qureshi and Mike Jansa
Robert Reinke (deceased)
Doug and Lynne Seus
Amy and Israel Shapira
Suzi Sheaffer and Brenda Armstrong
Robert and Rosanne Stocker
Stuart and Melissa Strahl
Debi Strong
Steve and Shari Sutherland
Cheryl L. Taleff (deceased)
Steve Thompson
Gary J. and Rita Wolfe

Photo by Ray Rafiti

Planned Giving

Vital Ground received some special gifts during this biennium that help continue the organization's long-term mission to protect grizzly bear habitat. For us, there is no greater compliment than being deemed worthy enough to be included in the legacy of special donors through their wills, trusts and other planned gifts. We are often blessed beyond words as well by the sizeable nature of such gifts. Giving back to the land and landscapes that have inspired all of us throughout our lives is the ultimate legacy one can leave on this Earth, and we want to share two special bequests with you.

Michael Downs [1947–2009] may have played the role of a "gruff trucker guy" according to his cousin Kate Dernocoeur, but underneath it all lay a kind, soft heart. The only child of Barbara "Barbie" Mickey, a single parent, Mike was raised in Blue, a tiny hamlet in extreme eastern Arizona, and through the years he lived in several western states, including Alaska. Before he died, he had begun "snowbirding" in northern Idaho! Wherever he went, he was devoted to his mother, and together they were passionate about animals. One of his favorite jobs was hauling straw for the Iditerod, and on every road trip Mike had his beloved schipperke dogs—and often horses—in tow. "I often thought Mike was a very big man for taking care of Barbie the way he did," his cousin Kate wrote. "The greatness of an unselfish heart is one lesson he left behind." When Mike Downs died in August 2009, his unselfishness showed in a big way. He left the great majority of his estate to various charities, including Vital Ground. It's sweet irony that the place Mike chose as his last homestead was in northern Idaho, not far from Vital Ground's Bismark Meadows—a project Mike's legacy is slated to help complete.

Jack D. Maertzweiler [1944–2010] loved the outdoors—hunting, fishing and camping. From the time he was a Cub Scout, up through Boy Scouts and until he passed away at age 65, Jack never missed an opportunity to inhale the fresh scent of the outdoors and make friends along the way. Married for a number of years, Jack divorced and set out to travel in his RV through the southwest and up through Utah and Montana, where state and national park campgrounds lent themselves to lots of fishing, campfires and camaraderie. And, never far from his heart was the inspiration left by Doug Seus and Bart the Bear. Jack's love of the outdoors and nature is living on through his bequest to Vital Ground to further support grizzly bear survival, and we at Vital Ground are honored to carry out his final wishes.

Photo of Jack Maertzweiler courtesy of Michael Maertzweiler.
Photo of Michael Downs courtesy of Kate Dernocoeur.
Background photo by Richard Palmer

Donors and Partners 2010–2011

The Vital Ground Foundation gratefully acknowledges the many donors and partners who supported our work to protect and restore North America's grizzly bear populations by conserving wildlife habitat. Unfortunately, limited space prevents us from providing a complete listing of all donors. Listed donors contributed at least $100 during the 2010–2011 biennium. We regret any inadvertent omissions or errors, and ask that you bring these to our attention by calling 406-549-8650.

$100,000 - And Above

Douglas A. Cluff (deceased)
Michael Downs (deceased)
Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
Jenkins Family LLC
Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

$50,000 - $99,999

The William H. Donner Foundation
Ken and Julie Jenkins
Johnson Family Foundation
National Fish & Wildlife Foundation
Sally O. Smyth and Tom Demarco

$25,000 - $49,999

Laura V. and Michael E. Alverson
Jack David Maertzweiler (deceased)
Montana Coffee Traders
Oberweiler Foundation

$10,000 - $24,999

Jennifer Aniston
The Augustyn Foundation Trust
Jeff and Debi Augustyn
John and Sou Barrett
George and Brenda Brimhall
Brookfield AAZK Chapter
Cinnabar Foundation
Carolyn E. Dobbs and Russ Fox
Eugene and Estelle Ferkauf Foundation
Tom and Lynn Fey
Jim and Norma Fosgate
Peter C. and Caroline C. Guynn
Greg and Alicia Johnson
Gary and Kellie Landers
Joe and Mary Matza
Phil Minsky
Qureshi Family Foundation
Ten Spoon Vineyard + Winery
Sam Testa
Wiancko Charitable Foundation
Wilburforce Foundation
Wildlife Land Trust/HSUS

$5,000 - $9,999

Wally and Sandy Becky
Merton and Bonnie Bell
Molly Bundy-Toral
Yvon Chouinard
Clayton A. Struve Family Foundation
Dept. of Fish Wildlife & Parks
Patty Dominick (deceased)
Lyle Gold
Jack and Maria Langer
Tom and Mary Mackey
Jack D. and Jan C. Massimino
Thom and Maureen Mayer
Banu Qureshi and Mike Jansa
Chicago Zoological Society
Stuart and Melissa Strahl
John Swallow and Lori Wolford-Swallow
Travelers For Open Land
Treasure Mountain Inn
Victoria and Ray Wallick
Brian and Meggen Wilson

$2,500 - $4,999

Colleen Coghlan
Dennis and Sherrie Gardner
Terri Gillespie
Mary E. Goza
Jack Horner
Christopher E. and Theresa Houck
Nathan and Elizabeth Johnson
Land Trust Alliance
Elizabeth A. Lendrum
John McLean
Natural Balance Pet Foods, Inc.
Norcross Wildlife Foundation
Michael and Susan Powell
Matthew Ragon
Susan Roos
Debi L. and Richard P. Strong
Texas Coffee Traders
Gene and Patricia Tingle

$1,000 - $2,499

Robert Attenborough
Bill and Judy Banning
Barbara Bazzone and Joseph Shuster
Angus and Frances Beal
Boyd Foundation
Joseph and Dawn E. Brown
Thomas W. Brown
Kathie Broyles
Rick Bryan
David K. Campanile
Jack Capp
Danielle Cassell
Shelly Catterson
Frank Clifford and Barbara C. Anderson
Nancy Davis and Karl Hoerig
Adam Dunsby
Dana Edwards
Jeffrey and Leigh Ehrenkrantz
Charlie and Mary Lynn Eiseman
First Interstate Bank
Daniel McPhun and Kristen Fletcher
The William Wishnick Foundation
Barbara L. Harris-West
Michelle Heath
Dan and Diane Henry
Kirk and Beth Horn
Laura and Jim Johnson
Clarissa M. Jonas
Cory Keller
John & Ciara Kennedy
Donald N. Leach
Lynnette Lines
Jim and Linda Meece
George D and Nancy Melling
Teresa H. Meng and Simon Holden
Microsoft Giving Campaign
David M. Mock
Lynn Moran
Dave and Connie Murray
Gregory A. Murray
Archie J. Newell
Paige Rense Noland
Jack Noll and Barbara Walker
Michael and Dawn Norton
Michael J. and Christine Pugsley
Jeanette Augusta Rashti
Thomas Rechlin
Marianne Reese
John R. Schleppegrell, Jr.
Terry Serek and Duane H. Thorkildsen
Doug and Lynne Seus
Sheila Shiozaki
Peter Sikes
Genny Smith
Glenn Sorenson and Lynn Perkins
Fran Spector
Hope B. Stevens
Kevin D. Stevens
Peter Stevens
James G. and Joretta J. Stewart
Vincent and Sandra Streech
Robin Tawney-Nichols and William Nichols
The India Blake Foundation
The Lacy Foundation, Inc.
Richard E. and Ruth Waltman
Hansjörg and Anita Weisskopf
David and Mary Dale Wesley
Tom and Arlene Weyl
Jim and Sally White
Jonna and Doug Whitman
Kelly and Bernard Wilson
Gary J. and Rita Wolfe
Marcia H. Wolfe
Inga Yandell
John and Olivia Ziegler
Edward Zwick and Liberty Godshall

$500 - $999

Advanced Litho Printing
Nathalie Alberts
John Angner
Eric Bagelmann
Kevin D. and Anna M. Barrowclough
Janet Beatty
Sandra Berrens
Big Prints Plus
Richard Boughton
BP America Inc./The Fabric of America Fund
BP Fabric of America Fund
John S. Brack
Charlotte and Chris Bradley
Robert Brookman
Mark Chaffee
Edward J. and Mary F. Chisak
Robert C. Cohen
Joey Colleran and Andy Sable
Kathy Comfort-Hamilton
Pamela Cox
Jon Davison and Sally Cruikshank
Richard and Deborah Davis
Noelle Domanico
Richard Fabian
Dianne M. Farrell
James J. and Judy L. Flanigan
Kerry Fott
Shannon Foley
Kristen Frame and Graham Campbell
Brent and Allison Gardner
Peter and Heidi Gatch
Tracey Gerber
Kenneth Goebel
Alwin C. Green, Ph.D.
Zeki Gunay
Brian and Heather Hall
Jack Hanna c/o Columbus Zoo
Charlotte Heldstab
Barbara Horn
Steven B. Ingle
Catherine Ives
Roy and Anne Jespersen
Ann and Phil Johnson
Jodi Johnson
Walter Kirn
Karen Klages
Laurie and Rick Kline
Robert W. and Jan Koons
Scott and Dianne Lewis
Christine Lorentz O'Beirne
Jack and Natalie Lyon
Leslie Ann Mahr
Kelly Martin

Donors and Partners 2010–2011

Photo by Robert Scriba

Tia Matza-Didden
Mike and Connie Mitchell
Anne B. Mize
Montana Association of Land Trusts
Montana Shares
Gorden and Cynthia Montana
Diane Morison
Jim Morse
Kelly Nace-Jindrich and Michael Jindrich
Kim Pickering
Debra Potts
Susan L. Powell
Tim Raines
Joe L. and Sue N. Reina
Debra Rice and Pamela Parks
Kirsten Schaefer
Jed and Melanie Seus
Lenore M. Sivulich
Gregory Sobel
Jill Sousa
Rick Stewart
Robert and Rosanne Stocker
Deanna Summerly
Peggy A. Tagesen
Shelli Tobis
Tom Tomlinson
Kevin Wagner
Andrew Weigel
Sig and Anne L. Weiler
Mary Frances Weinert
Donald and Deborah Weule
Annie Yackshaw

$100 - $499

Ingrid Akerblom
John and Jennifer Akers
Daniela and George Aleco-Sima
Kevin Allman
Robert J. Alspector
Scott and Kathie Amann
Dr. Ravel F. Ammerman
Paula Andersen and Frank Glista
Leonard Jalbert and Sue Anderson
E. Stormy Apgar
Dana M. Archey
Arden Entertainment
John Armistead
Daphne T. Armour
Roy Ault
David Auman
Larry Aumiller and Colleen Matt
Jessica L. Baatz
Sarah Babicek
David and Shepora Baldwin
Doreen Baleria
Bobbi Ball
Derria D. Banta and Matthew Farling
Jean Bartell
Janine and Tom Bastian
Sharlot B. Battin
Tom and Marilyn Beerman
Susan Begley
Brad and Jennifer Bennett
Kristyne Berg
Helen Biggs
Sheryl Billeaudeaux
Biomimicry Institute
Mark Birsinger
Diane Bode
Andrea Bonette
Karen L. Boone
Judith Boren
Judith Bowker
Benjie Bowlin
William Brabender
Kym Robert Bradshaw
Krister Bragstad
Katharine Brant
Ethan Bregman
Jan Brocci & Michael Williams
Matthew Brodeur
Nancy Elaine Broskie
John A. Brubaker
John A. Burke
Robert Buys
Karen Byington
Robert Caccavale
Dr. Carol T. Cady
Joanne Campbell
Pascha and Craig Campbell
Lynn Carlson
Daniel W Carney
Todd and Mishe'le Carroll
Laura Carstenson
Jay H. and Linda K. Casselberry
Nazario and Sabina C'de Baca
Philip S. and Jackie Chiaviello
Olivia Chuba
Karen Marie Church
Donna Clark
Michael Clark
Bibi and Marty Clarke
Tom Coffee
Jayne S. Collins
John Collins
Even T. Collinsworth, III
Combined Federal Campaign
Commission Junction, Inc.
Patrick E. Considine and Susan Blifeld
Mark and Sharon Cormican
Robert Corrington
Ralph and Sheryl Costanzo
Nancy and Bill Coughlin
Ann and Paul Cournoyer
Sid Cox, Jr.
Kim Crandall
Dan Crockett and Liz Bradley
Kevin M. Culp
Dorothea Curran
Judy and John Cushing
Alan Dahl
Judith Dammel
Robert R. and Teresa Dances
Kate Davis
Erzsi Deak
Clare Dean

Lydia F. Delman
Donald W. Depoto, MD
Carolyn M. Derr
George Dersch
Christopher and Courtney DeTemple
Denise Devore
Christine DiCurti
Deborah Diehl
Julie A. Diggs
Terry L. Disharoon
Susan Dolan
Anne K. Dougherty
Les Dunbar
Francoise Dupuis
Steve and Valli Durham
Carol A. Dvorak
Conley and Pat Dykes
Dustin Eaton
Mary Alison Ebert
Eric Eibe
John and Marilyn Erickson
Mark Fakhouri
Patricia Falabella
Linda Feeney
Maria Ferrer
Harry and Karen S. Fialkov
Christina Fleming
Michael F. Foley
Kathie J. Foote
Sally Foster
Gerald and Toots Foth
Geri Fraijo
Chuck Frank
Allison Friberg
Mike Fullerton
Don and Mary Garner
William J. Garrity
Glenda and Richard Gehri
Nik and Kate Geranios
Anne Giansiracusa
Judy Good
Goodsearch
Athena Van Gorder
L. Stuart Gordon
Chuck and Patty Gorman
Horace Gormley
David C. Greb
Gary Green
Kortney Groves
Mark Grupe
Ann E. Haber
Gary Hagen
Chris and Kathleen Hallsey
Elizabeth Hamann
Linda S. Hamann
Joe Hamlin
Donald J. Hammerlindl
Susan L. Haney
Stephen M. and Suzanne Hankard
Luanne Hansen
Jody and Bob Hanson
Michael Hanson
Marilyn L. Harman
Joanne Harris
Karen Harszy
Jerilynn Hart
Tom Hartman
Bob and Nell Harvey
Larry and Vivian Harvey
Alex Hasson
Charles and Patty Hawker
Rocky and Kat Hawkins
Ken R. Hayes
John Hechtel
Michael J. Hehir
John Herklotz
Raul Rodriguez Hernandez
Barbara and Hanspeter Hertner
Lavernna Hess
Gail Hettenbach
Randal Hicks
Thomas Hilley
Linda Hirsh
Sharon R. Hirshorn
Dianne M. Hobbie
Nance R. Hoelker
Erin Hofmann
Marcia Hogan and Karl Englund
Kathleen and Harold Soo Hoo
Martha S. Hope
Tara and Troy Hopwood
Martin Hornstein
Catherine Hoss
Rob van Hout
Jennifer Howe
Lynn H. Howe
Karl Hrenko
Paula Hughes
Susie and Elliot Hulet
Michael Hurley
Betsy Hutcheson
Donna M. Hutchinson
Janice Hyland
Constance Irwin
Nao Ishibashi
Scott Jennings
Lisa Jessup
Linda Johns
Jan Johnson
Alice Mae Johnson
Brian Johnson and Laurie Greenlee
Brianne Johnson
Chuck Johnson
Dwight and Cheryl Johnson
Gina Johnson
Sally Johnson
Eric Jones
Mark and Travis Jones
Michael and Rosemary Joslin
John Kane
Thomas Kanyak
Hadrian R. Katz
Georgina Kazan-Rowe
Sher Keene
Lawrence and Floran Kepic
John Kessler
Gary & Anita Kingsbauer
Rick Kingsley
George Kinkle
Laurence and Ruth Kinsolving
Darryl and Judy Kissinger
John M. Kittross
James Klich
Dr. Melissa A. Kling-Newberry
Kathryn H. and Larry R. Koelsch
Anne Koivisto
Helena Kosilla
Shirley Kovar
Susan and Jim Kowalczik
Dick and Pamela Krakowski
Lynne M. Kramer
Sandy and Steve Kratville
Donald F. Krause
Oliver Kroll
Ruth Labarge
Molly Lambert
Traci and Michael Lambert-Cwerenz
Roger and Sue Lang
Rick Lanham
Steven Lanum
Tara E. Larsen
Christopher Larson
Ann Latham
Dayle Laughlin
Linda Jo and Ed Lautar
Jim Laybourn
Elise E. LeBlanc
Kathleen D. LeFauve
Maureen Leshendok
Terri Lindgren
Joanne Lipsig
Bill and Bonnie Love
Jim and Maureen Love
Christopher Scot Lowry
Anne K. Lucas
Ben Luety and Treena Wong
Leonard and Carol Lutey
Ryan and Jennifer Lutey
James Macleod
John Maddocks
Terry L. Maderak
Bernice C. Maertz
Karen Magill
Drs. Paula and Walt Mahoney
Dub and Linda Maitland
Terence J. and Julie Malida
Les and Rita Marcum
Wayne and Tanya Marhefka
Terry and Daniel Marin
Ann Marie Marinaccio
Marika Martinez
Tracey A. Mathews
The Mawhinney Enterprises Inc
Joanne Mayo
Thomas J. Mazzarisi
Dennis McAvoy
Craig M. McBeath
Scott and Theresa McCall
Ian and Anne McCarthy
Astrid McClean
Martin McClean
Winton McKibben
Linda and Blake McKibbin
Janet H. McLaughlin
Nancy A. and James McLaughlin
Mimi McMillen
Sally E. Mechels
Doug and Joni Meigs
Doug Metzger
Marilyn B Meyers
Linda Miles
Kevin Mitchell
James and Shelly Moloney
Sherry and Adam More
Victoria Morrison
Deborah L. Morrow
Pari Morse
Jimmy D Mount
Vicki L. Muir
Harlan L. Mumma
Nathaniel Mundy
The Muralt Family Foundation
Cynthia B. Murphy
Nancy L. Myers
Cameron Nace
David Nead
Greg Negra
Judith L. and Hector Nielsen
Robert Nixon
Bob Nordstrum

Donors and Partners 2010–2011

Stan Noren
Chris Nunnally
NYSE Euronext Foundation, Inc.
Terry and Ronda O'Brien
Lora B. O'Connor and
Timothy P. Provow
Mike Oehler
James Olmes
Richard Olsson
Rick and Penney Oncken
Meche Ortega
Christine Paige and Tobin Kelley
Laura M. Parrott
Tad L. and Diane Parvin
John Patterson
Paul Pawenski
Kimberly Payne
Ken Perske
Walter and Peggy Peschel
Arthur G. and Marcia A. Peterson
David Pettit
Steven W. Pfettscher
Farianne M. Phillips
Gordon Phillips
Beth Piburn
Heidi Pinkerton
Cleve and Marty Pinnix
Karen Pinyoun
Bob Pizzurro
Stephen Pollard
PostNet
James Powers and Erica Johanson
Edwin and Sherry Prator
Joanna Prukop
J. David and Susan B. Puett
Douglas C. and Betty L. Purl
Andrea Purvis
Sandi Quinn and Andrew Adamian
Tom and Teresa Quinn
Carl Racchini
Mary Ann Radley
Elisabeth Ralston
Gina Rawson
Monda Ray
Peter and Susan Rayls
Ted Rechlin
Craig Reece
James and Linda Regnier
Melanie Regnier
Celese Rei
Bruce Reynolds
Nancy Reynolds
Mary Beth Richardson
Dane Richman
Howard N. Rigby, Jr.
Louise Riley
Martha Riter
Kathleen R. Roberts
Marion S. Roberts, Jr.
Kathleen and Randy Robinson
Denise Rochette
Daniel and Cindy Rogers
Penny Ronning
Grant R. Rose
Robert E. Rose
Lee Roseberry
Christopher N. Rowley
Sylvia Rozell
Josh and Jenna Rubenstein
David A. Rubini
Ray & Louise Ruggiero
Richard and Cheryl Runstedler
John Rust
Jason, Shelley and Mariah Ryan
Susan M. Sabala-Foreman
John Salisbury
Myrna J. Salminen
Jerry and Carole Sanders
Deborah Schaeffer
Donald Scherzi
Geralyn A. Schiffler
Arne L. Schmidt and Laurel Moore
David Schmidt and Heather Scott
Steven and Marilyn Schmidt
Richard Schneider
Rick Schoenfield
Leslie Schomer
Joan Schumacher
Lyle and Jill Schumacher
John C. Scibek
Cheryl Scott
Steven J. Scott
Joyce Seebaum
John Seets
Glenn Seiler
Robert Sellars
Daphne Herling and Stephen Seninger
Sharon Sharratt
Suzi Sheaffer and Brenda Armstrong
Donna Shephard
Renu Doshi and Jason Shuemaker
Ramona G. Sierra
Ann Silvers
David Simpson
Kevin Sizer
Darryl R Slavin
Susan Slotnick
Mary Smith
Rhona Smith
Richard L. Smith and Heather A. Cross
Cynthia Smoot
Donna Snow
Derek Solomon
Tena Spier
Margaret L. Spilker
Peggy Spilker
Clark Spoden
Sportsman & Ski Haus
Elizabeth St. Thomas
Mrs. Patti Jo and Mr. Charles Staples
Kylie and Peter Stathis
Albert and Helen Stauderman
David Stavoe
Lonnie Steele and Steve Bell
Phil and Karen Stefanini
Susan Steffens
William Stephenson
David Stewart
Gary and Connie Stewart
Glenn Stewart
Noeleen Stewart
Robyn Stoddard
Patricia Stokes
Susan Storcel
Carrie Story
Scott Strasser
Kenneth Stratton
Stephen Street
Judith A. Strom
John D. Suiter
Shari and Steve Sutherland
Linda Swanberg
Susan K. Swearingen
John and Holly Swezey
Bruce Tannehill and Gail Cleveland
Nicola Wendy Taw
Ivan C. and Laurie K. Taylor
John Taylor
Kelley M. Tees
Donald Terrell
Ralph and Bette Thisted
Jeff and Linda Thomas
James L. Thompson
Matthew J. Thompson
Steve Thompson
Julie Thornburg
Kelly and Pete Travers
Meg Tronquet
Sharon Trotta
Truist
Albert Tschanett
E.W. Marshall Tucker
Waino Tuominen
United Way of Central New Mexico
United Way of Lewis & Clark County
United Way of Massachusetts Bay Inc.
Dona Upson
Cigdem Usekes
Sara van Valkenburg
Villa Maria Elementary
Barbara Wade
Debra Wagner
Barbara Walker
Michelle Walker
David H. and Victoria Wallace
Guy Wallace
Cynthia Waneck
Rebekah Wanger
Lauren Ward
Watermark Advertising
John Weaver
Paul and Bonnie Weiss
Mary-Jane Wengranowski
David M. Whitacre
Lornie White
Barton D. Whitman
Kal Wilde
Billy Williams
Len and Robin Williams
Connie Wilson and Bob Travis
Janet Wilson
Kai and Renate Winkler
Bonnie Winsor
Cathy Wise
Tatjana Woitynek
Robin Woods
Keith Wright
Pam Wright
Richard Yarnell
Lucia Young
Gary and Christine Younger
Bernice L. Youtz
Takashi Yumibe
J.K. Zimmerman, MD
Zions First National Bank

BART LEGACY SOCIETY LIST

Jennifer Aniston
Kelly A. Balliet, MD
Molly Bundy-Toral
Nancy and Bill Coughlin
Dana Edwards
Tom and Lynn Fey
Dennis and Sherrie Gardner
James R. and Meghan Holbrook
Patricia Shannon Hopson
Lori B. Kirk
Robert and Jan Koons
Banu Qureshi and Mike Jansa
Doug and Lynne Seus
Stuart and Melissa Strahl
Debi L. and Richard P. Strong
John Swallow and
Lori Wolford-Swallow
David and Mary Dale Wesley
Kelly and Bernard Wilson
Gary J. and Rita Wolfe
Edward Zwick and Liberty Godshall

CORPORATE MATCHING GIFTS

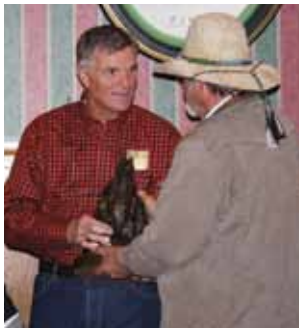
American Express Foundation
BP America Inc./The Fabric of
America Fund
Costco
GE Foundation
Global Giving
Microsoft Giving Campaign
NYSE Matching Gifts Program
Truist

BUSINESS PARTNERS

All American Dog E-School
Americana Studies Collection
Showroom and Design
Baer Bronze, LLC
Bare Essentials, Online Magazine
Douglas Chadwick, Author
Mark Cormican, Musician
Cutthroat Communications
Philip DeManczuk Photography
Monte Dolack Gallery
Global Giving
Goodsearch
Grizzly Cove Greetings
Idaho Scenic Images
Knight Inlet Grizzly Tours Ltd.
Montana Coffee Traders
Natural Balance Pet Food
Polebridge Mercantile
Ray Rafiti
REI
Jamie Scarrow Photography
Lance Schelvan Photography
Robert Scriba, Photographer
John Swallow Photography
Ten Spoon Vineyard + Winery
Texas Coffee Traders
Treasure Mountain Inn
Wasatch Rocky Mountain Wildlife
Watermark Advertising
Zöoprax Productions

CONSERVATION PARTNERS

BEARTREK/Wildlife Media
Blackfoot Challenge
Chicago Zoological Society
Heart of the Rockies Initiative
Idaho Department of Lands
Idaho Fish and Game
Land Trust Alliance
Montana Association of Land Trusts
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
The Nature Conservancy of Idaho
The Nature Conservancy of Montana
The Nature Trust of British Columbia
Northwest Connections
Resources Legacy Fund
Swan Ecosystem Center
Trans-border Grizzly Bear Project
Trust for Public Lands
US Fish and Wildlife Service
USDA Forest Service - Forest
Legacy Program
Wildlife Conservation Society
Wildlife Land Trust
Yellowstone to Yukon
Conservation Initiative



Photos by Terry and Dan Marin

Doug and Lynne Seus presenting "The Protector of Vital Ground" bronzes to Grizzly Council members (from left: John Herklotz, John and Sou Barrett, Gene Tingle).

GRIZZLY COUNCIL

Jennifer Aniston
Anonymous
The Augustyn Foundation Trust
Jeff and Debi Augustyn
John and Sou Barrett
George and Emily Beck
Jeff and Susan Bridges
George and Brenda Brimhall
Nazario and Sabina C'de Baca
Cinnabar Foundation
Douglas A. Cluff (deceased)
Dave Cutler
Catherine Deans-Barrett
Michael Downs (deceased)
Carolyn E. Dobbs and Russ Fox
The William H. Donner Foundation
Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
Eugene and Estelle Ferkauf Foundation
Tom and Lynn Fey
Peter C. and Caroline C. Guynn
John Herklotz
David and Tami Hirschfeld
Jenkins Family LLC
Ken and Julie Jenkins
Keith A. Johnson
Lori B. Kirk
Ed Levert
Jack David Maertzweiler (deceased)
Tom Mangelsen
Joe and Mary Matza
Lon and Donna Merrifield
Montana Coffee Traders
Bud Moore (deceased)
National Fish & Wildlife Foundation
Nature Conservancy of Canada
Oberweiler Foundation
Owens Foundation for
Wildlife Conservation, Inc.
Brad Pitt
Qureshi Family Foundation
Banu Qureshi and Mike Jansa
Robert Reinke (deceased)
Steven Segal
Doug and Lynne Seus
Sally O. Smyth and Tom Demarco
The Steele-Reese Foundation
Stuart and Melissa Strahl
Clayton A. Struve Family Foundation
John Swallow and
Lori Wolford-Swallow
Sam Testa
Gene and Patricia Tingle
Treasure Mountain Inn
Sig and Anne L. Weiler
Wiancko Charitable Foundation
Wilburforce Foundation
Wildlife Conservation Society
Wildlife Land Trust/HSUS
Brian and Meggen Wilson
Yellowstone to Yukon
Conservation Initiative

Financial Overview 2010–2011

The Vital Ground Foundation's public support and revenues totaled $3,491,484 during the 2010–2011 biennium. Of that amount, $284,650 was attributed to the value of the donated portions of two conservation easements and one fee simple property acquisition.

During this period, $1,755,967 (81.1 percent of all expenditures) was spent on Vital Ground's conservation and education programs. Additionally, Vital Ground acquired conservation land valued at $1,047,000. The purchase price of this land is not included in the program expenses reported in the graph, bottom right, but is recorded as an asset (conservation land) on the Statement of Financial Position (page 27). Vital Ground's 81.1 percent program expense ratio exceeds the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance Standards for Charity Accountability, which suggests that charitable organizations should spend at least 65 percent of total expenses on program activities.

Vital Ground also facilitated $1,862,091 of federal funding awarded via the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program for acquisition of three conservation easements valued at $2,249,000. These Forest Legacy Program grants and the corresponding values of the easements were not recorded in Vital Ground's financial statements.

The organization's total net assets on December 31, 2011 were $2,834,929, representing an 88 percent increase from December 31, 2009.

Vital Ground depends upon private contributions to finance our wildlife habitat conservation work. As a charitable nonprofit organization, our success depends upon the generous support of our many individual donors, foundations, and business partners. Donations to Vital Ground qualify as charitable contributions and may be tax-deductible. There are many ways to support our mission. A few of these are:

Individuals

- Cash Contributions
- Gifts of Securities or Real Estate
- Donated Conservation Easements
- Donated Conservation Land
- Bequests
- Charitable Remainder Trusts
- Charitable Gift Annuities

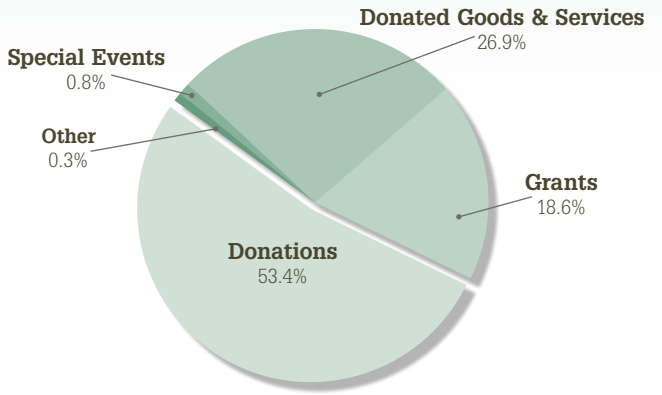
Businesses

- Cash Contributions
- Business Partnerships
- Sponsorships
- Employer Matching Gifts

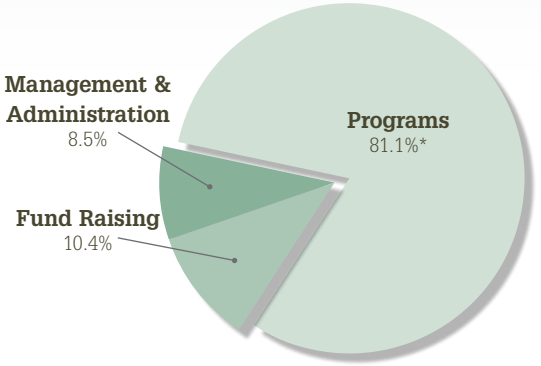
Foundations

- General Operations and Project Grants
- Matching Gift Support
- Endowment Funding

SOURCE OF FUNDS - $3,491,484



USE OF FUNDS - $2,165,110



**The Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance Standards for Charity Accountability suggest that a charity should spend at least 65% of its total expenses on program activities.*

Vital Ground is audited annually. To receive a copy of Vital Ground's most recent audited financial statements or IRS Form 990, please visit our Web site, *vitalground.org,* or contact our office (406) 549-8650. Vital Ground is a 501(c)(3) organization. Our federal tax ID number is 87-0483446.

Statement of Financial Position

December 31, 2011

Assets	
Cash	648,003
Stewardship/Legal Defense Fund	188,697
Investments	335,148
Inventories	15,267
Receivables	155,900
Prepaid Expenses	3,398
Property, Plant and Equipment	26,780
Conservation Land	$1,917,403
TOTAL ASSETS	**$3,290,596**
Liabilities	
Current	20,718
Long-term	434,949
TOTAL LIABILITIES	**$455,667**
Net Assets	
Unrestricted	2,324,161
Unrestricted – Board Designated	75,000
Temporarily Restricted	251,841
Permanently Restricted	183,927
TOTAL NET ASSETS	**$2,834,929**

Photo by Julie Cowan/WordCritterCreative.com

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 sustain habitat connections, conserve critical lands, 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!

T-2 Fort Missoula • Missoula, MT 59804
Telephone: (406) 549-8650 • Email: info@vitalground.org
Website: www.vitalground.org
Fax: (406) 549-8787

COMPILED/EDITED: Julie Cowan, WordCritterCreative.com
DESIGN/LAYOUT: Randy Stekly, Double Click Design
Printed with soy inks on recycled and recyclable paper.

PROTECTING HABITAT
CONNECTING LANDSCAPES
CONSERVING WILDLIFE

Photo by Jamie Scarrow