THE VITAL GROUND FOUNDATION | SPRING 2019

VITAL NEWS

SPECIAL EDITION:

ONE LANDSCAPE

CONNECTING VITAL HABITAT FOR WILDLIFE AND PEOPLE

A NEW CONSERVATION VISION: THE ONE LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE

Vast open spaces. Free-flowing rivers. A diverse tapestry of plant and animal life. In the Northern Rockies, wild places and iconic wildlife still abound.

Vital Ground is launching a groundbreaking initiative to protect forever this majestic, intact landscape and the wildlife that call it home.

As persistent development and climate change threaten the open space and wild species that set this region apart, the time to act is now. **You can help knit together the vital habitat wildlife need to survive.** From grizzly bears to moose to people, we all need room to roam. In this issue of *Vital News*, learn how you can join the effort to reconnect and save our region's One Landscape for future generations of wildlife and people.

Inside this issue:

One Landscape Initiative 2

Protecting Glen Willow Ranch 6

Vital Ground and Y2Y Save a Bridge to the Bitterroots 7

Your New Board Members 9

Stakeholders Plan Community Forest Stewardship 11

New Study Shows Benefits of Preventing Grizzly Conflicts 14

VITAL GROUND
FOUNDATION

One Landscape

Connecting Vital Habitat for Wildlife and People

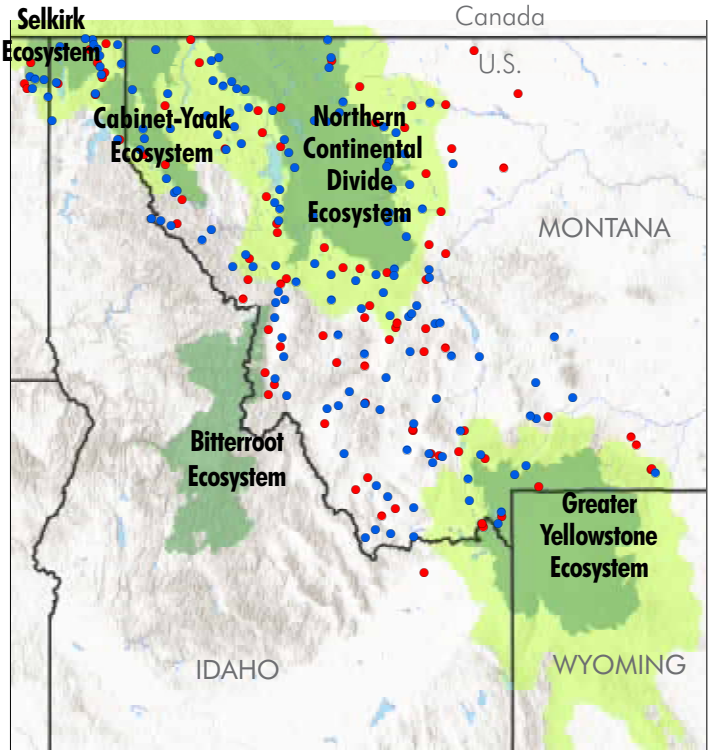
Since 1970, the world's human population has doubled. For wildlife, it's the opposite—in less than 50 years, the number of species on Earth has been cut in half.

The Northern Rockies and Inland Northwest are a rare holdout from this trend. Our region remains home to most of the diverse species that were here when Lewis and Clark explored 200 years ago.

If we want this rich wildlife community and majestic mountain landscape to remain intact for the next 200 years, the time to protect it is now.

Vital Ground's One Landscape initiative will permanently connect the wild strongholds of our region. By maintaining protected corridors across the landscape, our efforts will sustain movement, allowing animals to adapt to changing environmental conditions and improve the health of the ecosystems they inhabit.

Leading the way is the grizzly. By protecting the pathways that connect the Great Bear's range, we connect and protect land for all wildlife, from the threatened Canada lynx and bull trout to the plants and people who also thrive amid open space.



Connecting the Dots: Identified habitat conservation (blue) and conflict prevention (red) opportunities. Dark green areas mark federal grizzly bear recovery zones. Light green show the extent of the Great Bear's current range.

One Landscape isn't starting from scratch; it's a sharpened focus on protecting absolutely vital habitat areas. Rather than pursuing projects across all of grizzly country, we're honing in on the habitat grizzlies and other wildlife will need most as they reconnect their homelands, and on those places where conflict prevention work will keep bears out of trouble, now and into the future.

Recently, more than 60 federal, state and tribal biologists and wildlife managers from across the region helped Vital Ground identify and prioritize

HABITAT PROTECTION

153
conservation opportunities

33
priority conservation areas

188,000
total acres of priority areas

CONFLICT PREVENTION

84
coexistence opportunities

21
priority coexistence locations

$50,000
granted in 2018 to 13 partners

conservation opportunities. Now, with your help, it's time to get to work.

WHERE YOU CAN LEAD US

One Landscape™ is bigger than anything we've done before, but its success will rely on the same conservation work you've already helped Vital Ground accomplish. Our priority locations range from 200-5,000 acres—but protecting them will ripple across far larger expanses as we connect existing wild cores by securing linkages.

Along the rooftop of the Lower 48 and southern Canada, your support will safeguard wildlife movement between the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak areas, where grizzlies persist only in small sub-populations and wolverine, lynx, elk and moose also traverse a rugged mountain landscape.

Farther south, you can help protect pathways between the Northern Continental Divide, Bitterroot and Greater Yellowstone ecosystems. Grizzlies are already dispersing from the growing populations in and around Glacier and Yellowstone national parks. Protecting linkage habitat through the Bitterroot and the mountains of southwestern Montana will enable bears, wolves, cougars and other species to finally reconnect this wild countryside.

Picture it: a landscape where sustainability wins out over unchecked development. Where animals can move safely around our towns and working lands and communities invest in coexistence with wild species.

Whether it supports the conservation of linkage habitat or helps a community share the land with wildlife, **your contribution to One Landscape will carry real impact**. You'll join a growing coalition of visionary supporters who care about the long-term health of this region and all the creatures that call it home. You will lead the charge to protect and connect this place for future generations.

Louise Johns

Philip DeManczuk

CONSERVATION SPOTLIGHT
Wild River Project

Now in its third phase, Vital Ground and the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative are teaming up on the Wild River project in Montana's northwestern corner. Near the confluence of the Yaak and Kootenai rivers, we're protecting habitat once slated for residential subdivision, part of a crucial corridor between the Cabinet and Purcell mountain ranges.

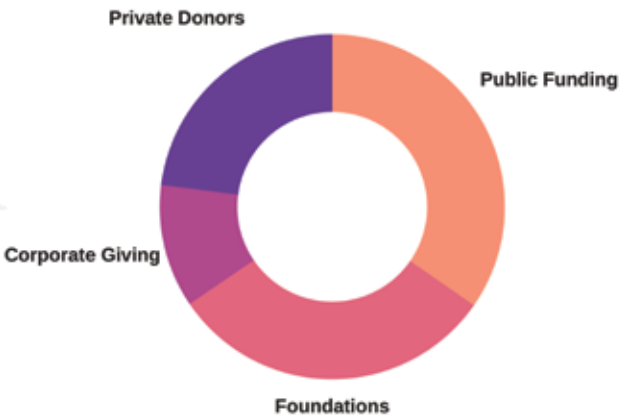
Gem Vision Productions/Y2Y

For All Things Wild

Grizzly conservation benefits far more than bears. With a home range of up to 500 square miles, the grizzly bear is an umbrella species. Areas used by a grizzly will also support hundreds of other native plants and animals, from moose and mountain lions to waterfowl and wildflowers.

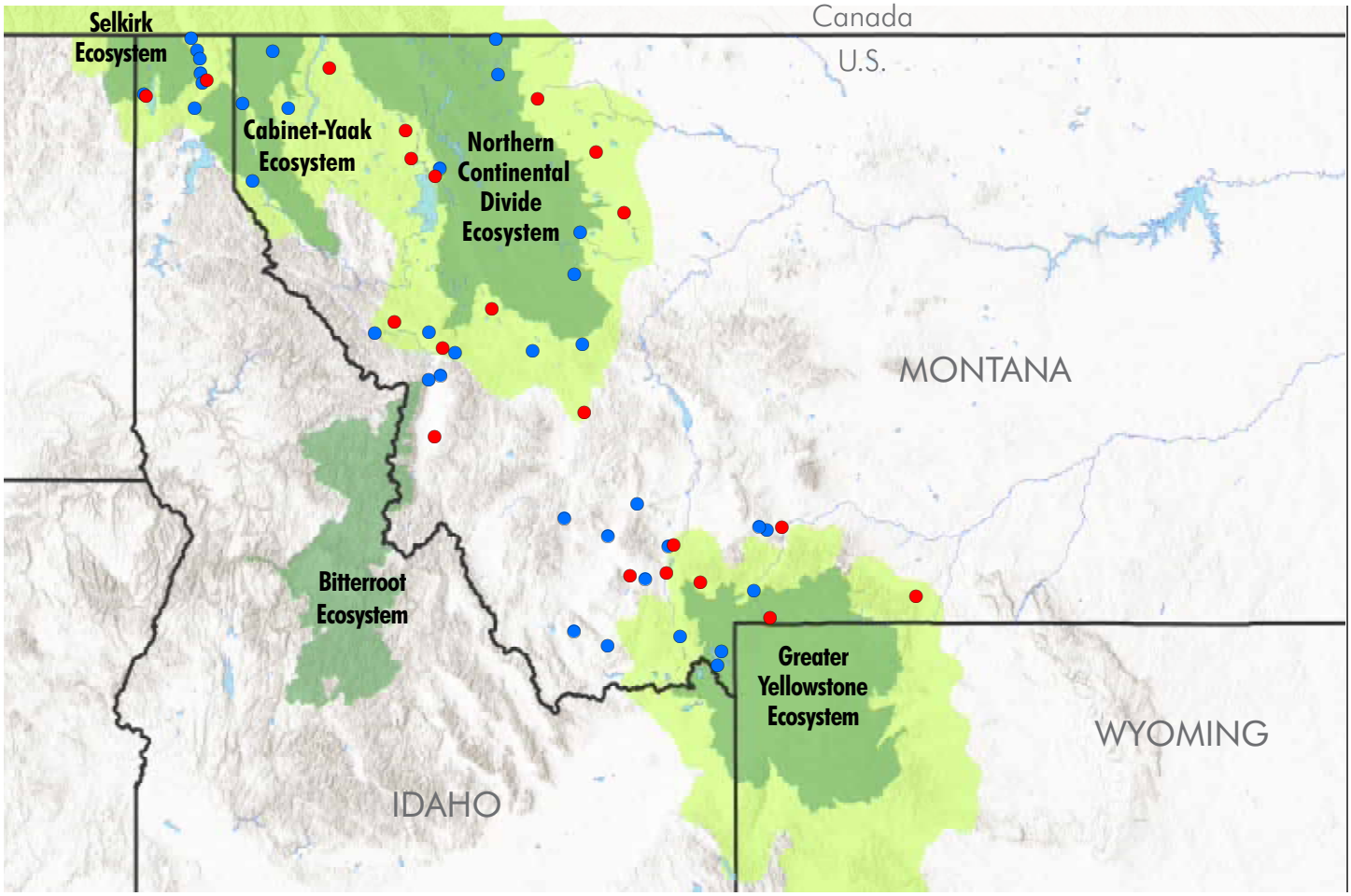
Vital Ground utilizes the best-available science. We consult with wildlife experts across the region to locate the most crucial places for conservation, then we get to work protecting key habitat and partnering with communities on bear-aware projects like electric fencing, improved sanitation, and range rider programs.

One Landscape: How We Get There



Protecting 188,000 acres of priority habitat will carry a significant price tag. Diverse partnerships, public conservation funds, charitable foundations and conservation-minded donors like you will all play a key role in achieving this bold vision.

The Path to One Landscape:
Protecting Habitat, Preventing Conflicts



The Priorities: From the full inventory mapped on Page 2, our planning pinpoints 33 locations as most crucial for habitat protection (blue) and 21 areas with the strongest need for conflict prevention (red). For grizzly bears and other wildlife, these locations link existing grizzly recovery zones (dark green) and buffer areas (light green) with one another, charting a path toward a connected, protected landscape. To address these priorities, Vital Ground will partner with willing landowners to safeguard habitat on private lands while also supporting community projects that prevent bear-related conflicts.

How You Can Help

One Landscape is the most ambitious undertaking in Vital Ground's 29-year history. Permanently connecting the grizzly's wild homelands will cost millions, but your pledge of continued support today—no matter how small or large—will make a difference. **Whether it conserves a tenth of an acre or ten thousand, your contribution will be felt on the ground.**

You will play a part in saving one of most important and intact ecosystems on the continent, protecting its iconic wildlife for future generations. By donating to One Landscape now, you will jumpstart this vital initiative. And stay tuned, because next year's 30th Anniversary campaign will send the push for One Landscape into high gear!

We can't do it without you! In the enclosed envelope or at www.VitalGround.org, make a contribution today.

A MONTANA GEM: GLEN WILLOW

CONSERVATION AGREEMENT PROTECTS MONTANA AG LAND AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

Photo by Herrera

When Mary Sexton had the chance to buy her grandfather's ranch, she knew the decision was about far more than herself.

"It's a small ranch that was my grandfather's that I've been fortunate enough to get back into the family," Sexton says of Glen Willow, a 650-acre spread near Choteau, along Montana's Rocky Mountain Front.

Now, the open space and natural resources of Glen Willow will be maintained in perpetuity. In collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Vital Ground and Sexton completed a conservation easement on Glen Willow earlier this year.

"It's really a gem that my grandfather kept very healthy," Sexton says. "I hope to continue that through my generation and my daughter's generation."

The easement may prove especially beneficial to grizzly bears. Glen Willow has seen increased grizzly traffic in recent years, especially during spring green-up, but Sexton and her family have long avoided encounters by minimizing attractants like loose livestock feed or garbage and making noise while carrying bear spray on parts of the ranch where bears may be present.

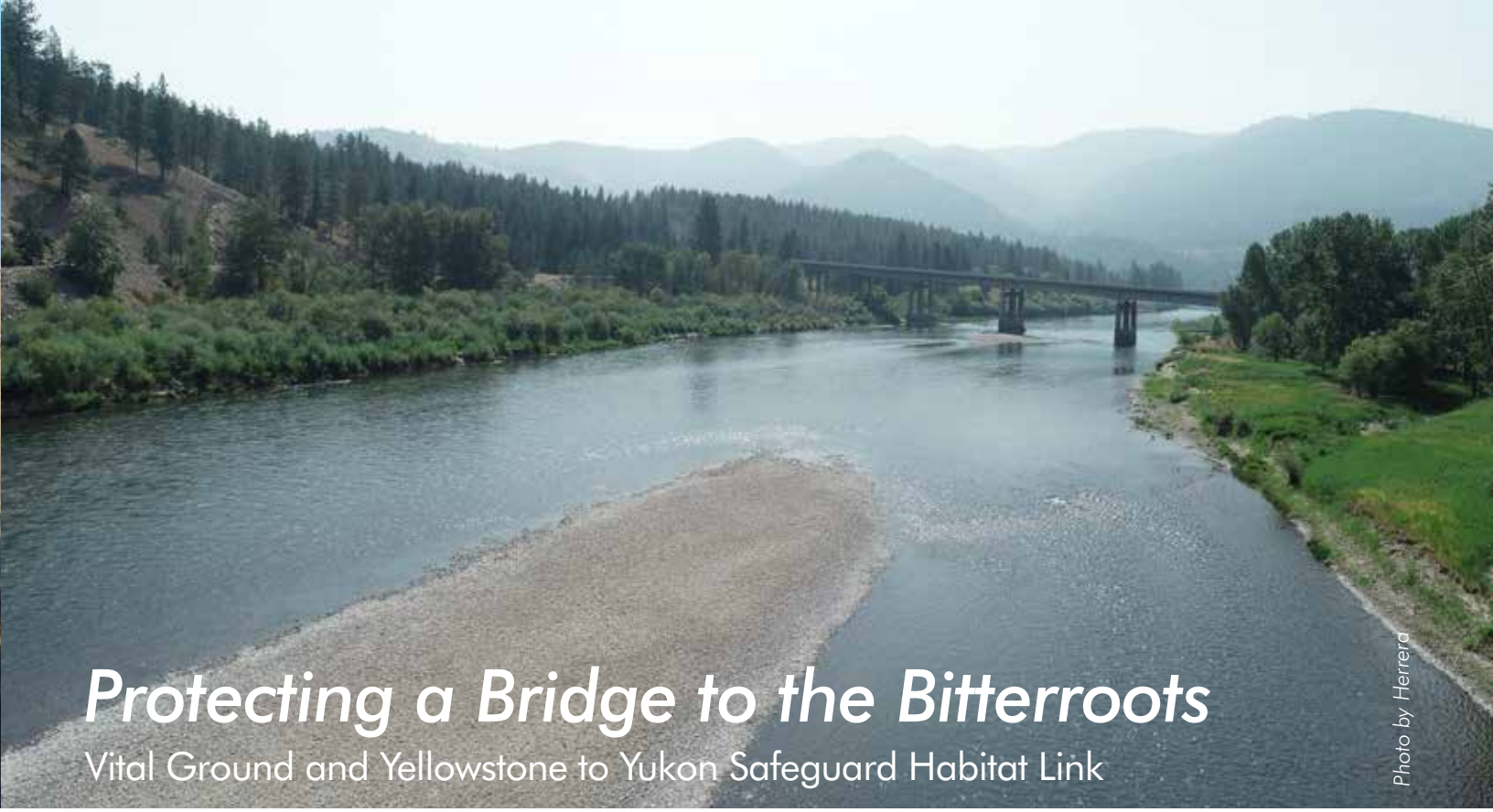
"Vital Ground understands that to have a vital grizzly bear population, we have to have private landowners that are also interested in maintaining the quality of their land," Sexton explains. "I think to find a partner like Vital Ground, who understand that working lands are also good habitat—it's very important."

For Sexton, the agreement also secures a family legacy of care for the land.

"I think a conservation easement is the very best protection you can give a piece of property in the long run," Sexton says. "Because we're all temporary."

In addition to generous donations by Sexton and other individuals, the project was also supported by the NRCS, Cross Charitable Foundation, Murdock Charitable Trust, William Wharton Trust, Tom and Lynn Fey, and the Pleiades Foundation.

Glen Willow feature story and video at vitalground.org/news



Protecting a Bridge to the Bitterroots

Vital Ground and Yellowstone to Yukon Safeguard Habitat Link

Photo by Herrera

A key wildlife pathway will remain undeveloped along Montana's Clark Fork River after Vital Ground and the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Y2Y) purchased 52 acres near Ninemile Creek.

The December acquisition helps connect the Ninemile and Bitterroot mountain ranges, lying adjacent to the Clark Fork and an Interstate 90 bridge where biologists have documented wildlife crossing under the highway. That makes it an especially valuable link for grizzly bears, as the Ninemile Range connects the Bitterroots to cores of grizzly habitat that stretch to Glacier National Park and the Bob Marshall Wilderness.

Grizzlies were first documented using the area in 2001, including one bear with a home range that includes the Ninemile area.

"I've observed the Ninemile Grizzly crossing under the I-90 bridge," says James Jonkel, Wildlife Management Specialist for Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. "Since 2001, we've had multiple verified grizzlies using this same area to cross the river, the most recent being two years ago."

Protecting a corridor across the Clark Fork and I-90 could aid the natural movement of bears back to historic range in the Bitterroots. While occasional sightings are reported, biologists do not consider the Bitterroot to host a resident grizzly population.

The purchase is the second of its kind for Vital Ground and Y2Y. The two organizations collaborated in March to acquire a similar parcel near the junction of northwestern Montana's Kootenai and Yaak rivers. Confluence areas like these represent bottlenecks for wildlife, leading to their high prioritization in conservation planning.

"This is an important step in ensuring that a variety of wildlife species can continue to move across the landscape," says Nick Clarke, High Divide Project Coordinator for Y2Y. "This project helps secure one of the few locations where grizzly bears are able to cross I-90. We are very excited to partner with Vital Ground."

Ninemile feature story at vitalground.org/news

FEATURED PARTNER

YELLOWSTONE TO YUKON INITIATIVE

A GEOGRAPHY OF HOPE

It takes a big, vibrant community of conservationists to enact meaningful change for wildlife. Supporters like you team up with Vital Ground and our partners at other nonprofits and federal, state and tribal agencies to implement the habitat protection and conflict prevention projects so important to ensuring a future for grizzly bears and other wildlife in the Northern Rockies.

But if there's one teammate that has been truly indispensable to Vital Ground's success in recent years, it's our friends at the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Y2Y).

Y2Y is like the wildlife it serves—its range is not defined by international borders. With offices in Alberta, British Columbia, Idaho and Montana, Y2Y helps connect and protect habitat from Wyoming all the way up to northwestern Canada, so people and wildlife can thrive across the entire span of this marvelous transboundary region.

Harvey Locke, co-founder and strategic advisor for Y2Y, works on private land acquisitions that connect grizzly populations. He says it's delightful to work with people who share similar values.

"Vital Ground is a super partner because they do what they say they'll do, and we've been able to design a long-term strategy that we've executed year after year," Locke says. "We put our heads together and get things done."

In the Northern Rockies, Y2Y has become a crucial partner for Vital Ground. By combining Y2Y's global reach and Vital Ground's experience as a land trust, we've brought a conservation outcome to Wild River, a crucial habitat connection in northwest Montana that was once slated for subdivision, and secured a wild pathway between two vast ecosystems at the junction of Montana's Clark Fork River, Ninemile Creek, and an Interstate 90 underpass frequented by wildlife (story on page 7).

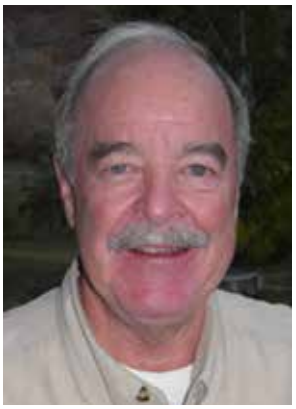
Between these recent successes and earlier collaborations, Y2Y is the largest private financial supporter in Vital Ground's nearly 30 years.

"Vital Ground's partnership with Y2Y has resulted in the permanent conservation and ongoing restoration and stewardship of just over 1,000 acres of key wildlife linkage habitat," says Vital Ground Executive Director Ryan Lutey. "These are areas that wildlife biologists across multiple jurisdictions have identified as the highest priority for sustaining a connected, resilient regional grizzly population. This collaboration really is the tip of the spear pushing back against the ongoing erosion of connections between the last remaining grizzly bear strongholds in the Lower 48."

With both organizations' visions pointed toward a connected landscape serving wildlife and people, and with continued support from contributors like you, we're just getting started!

Board Members Elected

Last fall, Tom Fey, Jo Lowe, Tim Polich and Dan Turner were elected to Vital Ground's Board of Trustees. Stuart Strahl reached his term limit after 12 years of service, including five as chair. Charlie Eiseman left the board after serving three consecutive terms. Thank you, Stuart and Charlie, for your dedicated service and welcome, incoming trustees!



Tom Fey

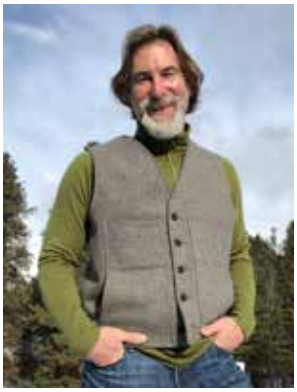
Tom spent 35 years managing businesses in the public sector. He founded and managed A&W Beverages, the canned and bottled A&W Root Beer Company, and was an executive of several companies. Tom has previously served nine years on Vital Ground's board, including as Vice Chair. He currently chairs the Audit Committee. Tom resides in Park City, Utah, with his wife, Lynn.

Jo Lowe

Having lived in the West all her life, Jo hails from Ketchum, Idaho, where she has served on numerous boards, the local zoning commission, and is active with many environmental and conservation groups. An artist by trade, Jo says Vital Ground's mission and vision are important to her because the organization's work is vital to creating wildlife pathways, genetic diversity, and is crucial to the health and welfare of multiple species. Jo has a horse, has ridden all her life, and loves skiing, hiking and biking.

Tim Polich

Replacing Charlie Eiseman as treasurer, Tim brings an extensive financial background to Vital Ground's board with 27 years in the banking industry as a commercial lender. A Montana native, he graduated from the University of Montana with a bachelor's degree in finance. With a strong dedication and passion for conservation, Tim served on the board of the Clark Fork Coalition as treasurer, helping protect water quality and quantity in western Montana. Tim is excited about his next chapter in conservation!



Dan Turner

Dan grew up as a Californian with roots in the Sierra Nevada mountains surrounding Lake Tahoe. Spending summers at a family homestead on Tahoe's west shore, he developed a deep love for the outdoors. After graduating from the University of California, Berkeley, he embarked on a 35-year career in securities trading and portfolio management. Dan is drawn to the urgency of Vital Ground's mission because he feels strongly about ensuring wildlife corridors not only for grizzly bears but for all species.

Vital Ground Participates in Montana Land Trust Day

Along with 12 other nonprofit land trusts working on private land conservation, Vital Ground participated in Montana's Land Trust Day at the Capitol on April 11. Over 30 land trust representatives visited with state legislators, Governor Steve Bullock (seated left in photo above) and department directors. The Montana Association of Land Trusts, of which Vital Ground is a member, hosted the event.

Chicago Zoological Society Awards $25,000 Grant

The Chicago Zoological Society (CZS) has awarded Vital Ground $25,000 from their Conservation Fund, which was created in 2011 to support initiatives in conservation leadership, animal welfare, field programs, research initiatives and training conservation leaders. The CZS Conservation Fund is supported by visitors' contributions to the Brookfield Zoo.

CZS's conservation programs and partnerships extend far beyond the gates of Brookfield Zoo. From their own initiatives to partnerships with other accredited zoos, universities and conservation groups, they support conservation research and programs around the world, including saving polar bears affected by climate change, discovering how to care for endangered amphibians, and grizzly bear habitat conservation in North America.

Chicago Zoological Society
Inspiring Conservation Leadership

In 2013 the CZS became a member of Vital Ground's Grizzly Council, a special designation for Vital Ground's most impactful donors.

VITAL GROUND AND ALVORD LAKE STAKE-HOLDERS STEWARD COMMUNITY FOREST

By Kali Becher, Land Steward

Forest thinning, prescribed burning, and education were hot conversation topics on March 6, when a group of volunteers, community members and representatives from organizations and agencies in northwestern Montana met to discuss future management and opportunities at the Alvord Lake Community Forest.

A COMMUNITY RESOURCE

In case you haven't heard about it, the Alvord Lake Community Forest is a 142-acre open space located along Alvord Lake, just to the northwest of Troy, Mont. In the early 2000s, a group of neighbors took a leap of faith and purchased the land in order to prevent subdivision and keep it accessible to the public.

The community held on, waiting for a long-term solution, and after 12 years the answer was found: a land trust to own the land; private, federal, and state funding to purchase the land; and community groups and volunteers to help manage the land. In 2016, a collaborative including Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, the Society of American Foresters, Vital Ground, the U.S. Forest Service, and other organizations and individuals established the Alvord Lake Community Forest.

Together the group mapped out the purpose of the space: to manage it as a productive forest while also improving forest health, restoring native plants, protecting important fish and wildlife habitats, continuing and expanding opportunities for outdoor education, and maintaining historical trail access and public uses including fishing, boating and dispersed recreation.

COLLABORATION AND CONSERVATION

The community forest designation hinges on community participation in future planning and decisions. While Vital Ground owns the land, we manage the forest with input and assistance from stakeholders. One way we engage stakeholders is to hold regular meetings to discuss management decisions and opportunities for the local community to get involved.

In partnership with the Forest Service, the Montana Department of Natural Resources recently awarded a federal Landscape Scale Restoration grant to Vital Ground, meaning there are now financial resources available to implement the management work set out in the Alvord Lake

(Continued on page 12)

Alvord Lake in northwestern Montana provides public access and wildlife habitat. Vital Ground and a stakeholder collaborative manage Alvord Lake Community Forest.

(Alvord Lake from page 11)

Management Plan. On March 6, our stakeholder group met in Troy to determine the best way to use this funding over the next three years, while also reviewing accomplishments, prioritizing management actions, and brainstorming ideas about outreach and education.

In the two years since the community forest was established, on-the-ground management has been ongoing. It has included over 40 acres of thinning to improve forest health and reduce wildfire risk, trail maintenance to maintain access on the loop trail around Alvord Lake, hand-pulling of noxious weeds, targeted herbicide use and the release of weevils, insects that target an invasive species without damaging native plants. In addition, numerous school groups from Troy visit Alvord Lake every year for environmental education field trips.

Stakeholders tour the Alvord Lake Community Forest in northwestern Montana. Vital Ground recently met with the Alvord Lake stakeholder group to review accomplishments, prioritize future management actions and brainstorm ideas about further outreach and education.

Work over the next three years will build on these accomplishments. The stakeholder group prioritized additional forest thinning totaling about 70 acres, a prescribed burn on approximately 20 acres, tree planting to restore forest diversity, and continued noxious weed control. The group also identified ways to increase community forest signage that will help raise awareness about its history, goals and importance.

The next few years should also provide forest tour opportunities so that the community can see what is happening on the ground. Stay tuned for upcoming events at Alvord Lake!

Tax Tips

Seldom-Used Tax Strategy Can Benefit You, Wildlife and Vital Ground

By Jim Soft, Planned Giving Specialist

We are currently experiencing a sustained, historic low interest rate environment, which presents an opportunity to generate substantial benefits for 1) you as a taxpayer; 2) the future of important wildlife habitat we are committed to preserve, and; 3) the organizational sustainability of Vital Ground.

A seldom-used tax planning strategy, when implemented, can generate all three benefits. This strategy is called a Vital Ground Life Estate.

The Internal Revenue Code allows a charitable deduction when a donor contributes a "personal residence or farm" to charity, but retains use of the property for life, e.g. "Life Estate."

The *personal residence life estate* could be your home, a vacation condo, cabin or house boat. The residence must contain facilities for cooking, sleeping, and sanitation to qualify.

The *farm life estate* is defined as any land used to produce crops, fruits, or other agricultural products or the sustenance of livestock.

For example, consider Jim and Linda, ages 70, who enjoy spending holiday weekends and vacations at their $300,000 lake cabin. Their kids have moved miles away to pursue careers and seldom spend time at their once-beloved cabin.

While Jim and Linda still use the cabin, they visit it less and wonder if it's worth continued real estate taxes, utilities, and insurance expenses. If sold, they fear a substantial capital gains tax.

One solution for Jim and Linda is to transfer their cabin to a Vital Ground Life Estate. Not only do they retain "ownership" of the cabin for their lives, but they also generate an immediate charitable deduction in the amount of over $146,000! Because of the low interest rate environment, the value of the remainder interest in Jim and Linda's cabin, which ultimately passes to Vital Ground, is unusually high for which **the Internal Revenue Service grants an exceptionally large immediate charitable deduction**. Depending on the couple's federal and state tax brackets, this deduction could produce an actual tax savings of up to $60,000!

Jim and Linda could use this tax savings in a variety of ways. They could use it to address ongoing real estate taxes and insurance costs. Or, as many tax-wise charitably minded people do, Jim and Linda could **use the charitable deduction to move money out of their Individual Retirement Accounts to Roth IRAs**—producing a tax-free Roth conversion!

Taking inventory of your own vital ground in financial and estate planning might generate practical as well as altruistic benefits to support Vital Ground's mission.

For more information, contact Development Director Kim Davitt at 406-549-8650.

Jim Soft's experience in the charitable sector spans 40 years, including serving on national/local industry boards. He specializes in financial/estate tax planning, redirecting tax dollars to charity, and often increasing cash flow for the taxpayer.

Read a longer version of this story with additional examples at vitalground.org/news.

BROWN BEAR'S WORLD

SHARING THE LAND

NEW STUDY SHOWS BENEFITS OF PREVENTING GRIZZLY CONFLICTS

Highways are a significant cause of both grizzly mortality and habitat fragmentation in the northwestern U.S. and southwestern Canada, but a new study shows that areas with active conflict-prevention programs saw an increase in grizzly movement between ecosystems.

By Matt Hart, Conservation Writer

Studying grizzly bears demands patience. For one, the bears, like humans, are slow reproducers—a female's typical gestation period lasts six to eight months, her average litter size is two, and she will usually raise those cubs for two years before mating again. Add to that male bears' penchant for solitary living and a large home range and you can start to see why it takes a long time for biologists to gather meaningful data on the species.

That makes a recently-published study analyzing bear-human conflict prevention especially significant. Led by Canadian biologist and Vital Ground advisor Michael Proctor, the project collected more than ten years of data from parts of the northwestern U.S. and southwestern Canada.

Their findings? In areas with active programs to prevent bear-related incidents—programs like subsidized electric fencing and bear-proof sanitation—the number of human-caused grizzly deaths decreased, while mortality rose where no active mitigation was present. Conflict reduction also correlated with bears moving more freely on the landscape, with increased travel and genetic exchange occurring between subpopulations after mitigation programs were in place. In other words, conflict prevention works.

HARD WORK HELPS BEARS

Published in the journal *Human-Wildlife Interactions*, the Proctor team's work analyzes conflict-prevention efforts within two grizzly populations: northwestern Montana's Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem and the international South Selkirk area surrounding the borders between Idaho, Washington and British Columbia.

In both areas, a significant change in bear management factors prominently. In 2009, Montana hired a dedicated grizzly bear conflict specialist for the Cabinet-Yaak. Six years earlier, in the South Selkirks, a Proctor-led group called the Trans-border Grizzly Bear Project began fundraising and implementing conflict-prevention measures. In each case, strategies included cost-share electric fencing programs, subsidizing or loaning bear-resistant garbage containers, and public bear safety education and outreach.

In both places, rates of human-caused bear mortality had been rising before the programs

began. In both places, they have decreased since. That's despite both grizzly populations experiencing an increase in overall numbers during the study period. The drop in bear deaths was especially significant in the Cabinet-Yaak, where human-caused mortalities dropped by roughly half from 2009-2018.

Critically, the authors compared these trends to Canada's nearby South Rocky grizzly population, where education and outreach occurred but was not accompanied by active mitigation efforts like fencing and sanitation. In this area, human-caused grizzly mortality has continued to increase significantly over the past decade.

FEWER CONFLICTS, MORE CONNECTIONS

Beyond their impact on bear deaths, the study also analyzed how conflict reduction related to grizzly movement across the region. Using data from radio collars and genetic sampling, researchers tracked grizzly travel across three different "fracture zones," where highways and other development have separated subpopulations. These included the Kootenai Valley, which splits the Selkirk and Purcell mountains around the Idaho-B.C. border; B.C. Highway 3, which divides the South Purcell and Yaak areas; and U.S. Highway 2, which separates the Cabinet and Yaak grizzlies of Montana.

In all three cases, more grizzlies traveled across the fracture zone from 2006-2017 than in 20 years of prior data. Genetic samples also revealed an all-important finding: while not yet present in the Highway 3 or Highway 2 areas, improved gene flow has accompanied conflict-prevention programs around the Selkirk-Purcell divide. DNA analysis since 2006 revealed 11 cases of a male bear successfully breeding after traveling across the fracture zone, while only one instance was documented in the 20 years prior.

While the authors acknowledge it is "difficult to conclusively prove" that conflict-prevention programs led to these landscape connections, there's no denying that fewer dead bears means more potential for gene flow. That's significant, as breeding events between ecosystems are critical to the grizzly's long-term stability throughout the region, saving subpopulations from the downward spiral of inbreeding.

CONSERVATION CHALLENGES AHEAD

At Vital Ground, preventing bear-human conflicts has become a critical component of our mission, joining habitat protection as parallel prongs in our work for durable grizzly recovery. Thanks to a generous commitment by The ALSAM Foundation and support from individual donors like you, we expanded our Conservation Partners Grant Program significantly in 2018, providing a dozen grants to conflict-prevention initiatives like the ones analyzed by the Proctor team.

These projects range from apple pickups near Missoula to dead livestock removal west of Glacier National Park to bear-proof sanitation for vacation rentals outside Yellowstone. Now, thanks to the Proctor team's research, there's data showing the strong connection between this vital work and measurable declines in bear mortality, as well as an uptick in grizzly movement between ecosystems.

That's valuable scientific grounding for the crucial effort ahead. South of the new paper's study area, grizzlies are ranging into areas that haven't seen them in a century. From the valleys linking Yellowstone and central Idaho to the plains of central Montana, these roaming bears are crossing paths with people and livestock—on agricultural lands, on the edges of towns, even high in the backcountry.

But as the new research shows, a larger grizzly presence on the land doesn't have to mean a spike in conflicts and untimely death for bears. If we invest in preventing conflicts across grizzly country, we will pave the way for a connected landscape where bears and people can better share space.

NON PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT #536
MISSOULA, MT 59801

The Vital Ground Foundation's mission *is to protect and restore North America's grizzly bear populations for future generations by conserving wildlife habitat, and by supporting programs that reduce conflicts between bears and humans.*

In support of this mission, we:

- Protect habitat that grizzlies need to survive including other species that share their range;
- Work where private lands and human impacts meet some of the wildest places left on the continent;
- Target projects that conserve critical lands, sustain habitat connections and prevent conflicts between bears and people;
- Ground our projects on current science and strong collaborative partnerships.

As a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit, our success depends on you!
Visit *www.vitalground.org* to donate or become a member.

♻Printed on PEFC certified paper with soy-based inks.

©The Vital Ground Foundation

Contact us at:
The Vital Ground Foundation
20 Fort Missoula Road
Missoula, MT 59804

(406) 549-8650 (Office)
info@vitalground.org
www.vitalground.org

Has your email or mailing address changed? Please let us know!

ACCREDITED LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

VITAL GROUND
FOUNDATION

FOUNDERS
Doug and Lynne Seus
Bart the Bear™

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Kelly Johnson, Chair
Wally Becky, Vice Chair
David E. Wesley, Ph.D., Secretary
Tim Polich, Treasurer
Sou Barrett
Jack Capp
Douglas H. Chadwick
Thomas H. Fey
Russell Fox
John Hechtel
Jo Lowe
Maureen Mayer
Andrea Nasi
Lynne Seus
Sally O. Smyth
Debi Strong
Dan Turner
Theresa Young

TRUSTEE EMERITUS
Doug Seus

STAFF
Ryan Lutey, J.D.
Executive Director
Kali Becher
Land Steward
Kim Davitt
Development Director
Mitch Doherty
Conservation Manager
Shannon Drye
Administration & Finance Director
Matt Hart
Conservation Writer
Kimberly Kozub
Membership & Administrative Assistant
Kevin Rhoades
Communications Director

NEWSLETTER
Kevin Rhoades
Editor

ADVISORY COUNCIL
Larry Aumiller
Lyle Gold
Keith Johnson
Colleen Matt
Nancy McLaughlin, J.D.
Chris Morgan
Michael Proctor, Ph.D.
Banu Qureshi
Derek Reich
Penny Ronning
John Rudolf

AMBASSADORS
Bart the Bear 2™
Honey Bump the Bear™
Tank the Bear™

Vital News is published twice annually. © 2019 by Vital Ground. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.