

**Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax**  
Under section 501(c), 527, or 4947(a)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code (except private foundations)

▶ Do not enter social security numbers on this form as it may be made public.  
▶ Go to [www.irs.gov/Form990](http://www.irs.gov/Form990) for instructions and the latest information.

**A** For the **2017** calendar year, or tax year beginning and ending

<b>B</b> Check if applicable:  <input type="checkbox"/> Address change <input type="checkbox"/> Name change <input type="checkbox"/> Initial return <input type="checkbox"/> Final return/terminated <input type="checkbox"/> Amended return <input type="checkbox"/> Application pending	<b>C</b> Name of organization <b>THE VITAL GROUND FOUNDATION, INC.</b>		<b>D</b> Employer identification number <b>87-0483446</b>
	Doing business as		<b>E</b> Telephone number <b>406-549-8650</b>
	Number and street (or P.O. box if mail is not delivered to street address)	Room/suite	<b>G</b> Gross receipts \$ <b>2,234,635.</b>
	<b>20 FORT MISSOULA ROAD</b>		<b>H(a)</b> Is this a group return for subordinates? ..... <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
	City or town, state or province, country, and ZIP or foreign postal code <b>MISSOULA, MT 59804-7202</b>		<b>H(b)</b> Are all subordinates included? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>F</b> Name and address of principal officer: <b>RYAN LUTEY</b> <b>SAME AS C ABOVE</b>		If "No," attach a list. (see instructions)	
<b>I</b> Tax-exempt status: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 501(c)(3) <input type="checkbox"/> 501(c) ( ) ◀ (insert no.) <input type="checkbox"/> 4947(a)(1) or <input type="checkbox"/> 527			
<b>J</b> Website: ▶ <b>WWW.VITALGROUND.ORG</b>			
<b>K</b> Form of organization: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Corporation <input type="checkbox"/> Trust <input type="checkbox"/> Association <input type="checkbox"/> Other ▶		<b>L</b> Year of formation: <b>1990</b>	<b>M</b> State of legal domicile: <b>UT</b>

**Part I Summary**

<b>Activities &amp; Governance</b>	<b>1</b> Briefly describe the organization's mission or most significant activities: <b>PROTECT AND RESTORE NORTH AMERICA'S GRIZZLY BEAR POPULATIONS BY CONSERVING WILDLIFE HABITAT.</b>		
	<b>2</b> Check this box <input type="checkbox"/> if the organization discontinued its operations or disposed of more than 25% of its net assets.		
	<b>3</b> Number of voting members of the governing body (Part VI, line 1a)	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>
	<b>4</b> Number of independent voting members of the governing body (Part VI, line 1b)	<b>4</b>	<b>17</b>
	<b>5</b> Total number of individuals employed in calendar year 2017 (Part V, line 2a)	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>
	<b>6</b> Total number of volunteers (estimate if necessary)	<b>6</b>	<b>29</b>
	<b>7 a</b> Total unrelated business revenue from Part VIII, column (C), line 12	<b>7a</b>	<b>0.</b>
<b>b</b> Net unrelated business taxable income from Form 990-T, line 34	<b>7b</b>	<b>0.</b>	
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>8</b> Contributions and grants (Part VIII, line 1h)	<b>Prior Year</b> 713,485.	<b>Current Year</b> 1,972,843.
	<b>9</b> Program service revenue (Part VIII, line 2g)	0.	0.
	<b>10</b> Investment income (Part VIII, column (A), lines 3, 4, and 7d)	1,725.	2,343.
	<b>11</b> Other revenue (Part VIII, column (A), lines 5, 6d, 8c, 9c, 10c, and 11e)	-13,948.	49,511.
	<b>12</b> Total revenue - add lines 8 through 11 (must equal Part VIII, column (A), line 12)	701,262.	2,024,697.
	<b>Expenses</b>	<b>13</b> Grants and similar amounts paid (Part IX, column (A), lines 1-3)	55,250.
<b>14</b> Benefits paid to or for members (Part IX, column (A), line 4)		0.	0.
<b>15</b> Salaries, other compensation, employee benefits (Part IX, column (A), lines 5-10)		401,696.	478,065.
<b>16a</b> Professional fundraising fees (Part IX, column (A), line 11e)		0.	0.
<b>b</b> Total fundraising expenses (Part IX, column (D), line 25) ▶ <b>138,230.</b>			
<b>17</b> Other expenses (Part IX, column (A), lines 11a-11d, 11f-24e)		398,697.	534,929.
<b>18</b> Total expenses. Add lines 13-17 (must equal Part IX, column (A), line 25)		855,643.	1,070,819.
<b>19</b> Revenue less expenses. Subtract line 18 from line 12	-154,381.	953,878.	
<b>Net Assets or Fund Balances</b>	<b>20</b> Total assets (Part X, line 16)	<b>Beginning of Current Year</b> 4,884,618.	<b>End of Year</b> 6,074,046.
	<b>21</b> Total liabilities (Part X, line 26)	45,107.	181,899.
	<b>22</b> Net assets or fund balances. Subtract line 21 from line 20	4,839,511.	5,892,147.

**Part II Signature Block**

Under penalties of perjury, I declare that I have examined this return, including accompanying schedules and statements, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, it is true, correct, and complete. Declaration of preparer (other than officer) is based on all information of which preparer has any knowledge.

<b>Sign Here</b>	Signature of officer		Date		
	<b>RYAN LUTEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b> Type or print name and title				
<b>Paid Preparer Use Only</b>	Print/Type preparer's name	Preparer's signature	Date	Check <input type="checkbox"/> if self-employed	PTIN
	<b>WAYNE R HIETT, CPA</b>	<b>WAYNE R HIETT, CPA</b>	<b>07/03/18</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>P00159424</b>
	Firm's name ▶ <b>WIPFLI LLP</b>	Firm's EIN ▶ <b>39-0758449</b>			
	Firm's address ▶ <b>101 EAST FRONT STREET #301</b> <b>MISSOULA, MT 59802</b>			Phone no. <b>406.728.1800</b>	

May the IRS discuss this return with the preparer shown above? (see instructions)  Yes  No

Part III Statement of Program Service Accomplishments

Check if Schedule O contains a response or note to any line in this Part III [X]

1 Briefly describe the organization's mission:
VITAL GROUND HELPS 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.

2 Did the organization undertake any significant program services during the year which were not listed on the prior Form 990 or 990-EZ? [ ] Yes [X] No
If "Yes," describe these new services on Schedule O.

3 Did the organization cease conducting, or make significant changes in how it conducts, any program services? [ ] Yes [X] No
If "Yes," describe these changes on Schedule O.

4 Describe the organization's program service accomplishments for each of its three largest program services, as measured by expenses. Section 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations are required to report the amount of grants and allocations to others, the total expenses, and revenue, if any, for each program service reported.

4a (Code: ) (Expenses \$ 473,249. including grants of \$ 37,000. ) (Revenue \$ 4,615. )
LAND CONSERVATION:

VITAL GROUND IDENTIFIES CRUCIAL GRIZZLY BEAR HABITAT ON PRIVATE LAND AND WORKS WITH WILLING LANDOWNERS TO PROTECT THE LAND'S CONSERVATION VALUES. THIS IS ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH THE VOLUNTARY PLACEMENT OF DONATED OR PURCHASED CONSERVATION EASEMENTS ON THE LAND, OR BY PURCHASING LAND IN FEE TITLE THEN MANAGING IT TO BENEFIT WILDLIFE AND THE PUBLIC. VITAL GROUND HAS A PERPETUAL RESPONSIBILITY TO MONITOR THE LANDS ON WHICH IT HOLDS CONSERVATION EASEMENTS TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH THE TERMS OF THE CONSERVATION EASEMENTS. VITAL GROUND HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO RESTORE AND MANAGE THE LAND IT OWNS TO PROVIDE QUALITY HABITAT FOR THE BENEFIT OF GRIZZLY BEARS AND OTHER WILDLIFE.

4b (Code: ) (Expenses \$ 350,640. including grants of \$ 20,825. ) (Revenue \$ 3,419. )
CONSERVATION EDUCATION:

VITAL GROUND PROVIDES INFORMATION ABOUT GRIZZLY BEARS, ASSOCIATED WILDLIFE, AND HABITAT CONSERVATION ISSUES THROUGH ITS PUBLICATIONS, SPECIAL MAILERS, WEBSITE, EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS, SOCIAL MEDIA, LIVE PRESENTATIONS, VIDEOS AND OTHER MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES. THE ORGANIZATION ALSO PARTICIPATES IN COLLABORATIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS TO PROMOTE THE CONSERVATION OF GRIZZLY BEARS AND THEIR HABITAT, PREVENT CONFLICTS BETWEEN BEARS AND HUMANS, AND ENHANCE THE SURVIVAL OF GRIZZLY BEARS.

2017 ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDE:

4c (Code: ) (Expenses \$ including grants of \$ ) (Revenue \$ )

4d Other program services (Describe in Schedule O.)
(Expenses \$ including grants of \$ ) (Revenue \$ )

4e Total program service expenses 823,889.

**Part IV Checklist of Required Schedules**

	Yes	No
<b>1</b> Is the organization described in section 501(c)(3) or 4947(a)(1) (other than a private foundation)? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule A</i>	X	
<b>2</b> Is the organization required to complete <i>Schedule B, Schedule of Contributors</i> ?	X	
<b>3</b> Did the organization engage in direct or indirect political campaign activities on behalf of or in opposition to candidates for public office? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule C, Part I</i>		X
<b>4 Section 501(c)(3) organizations.</b> Did the organization engage in lobbying activities, or have a section 501(h) election in effect during the tax year? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule C, Part II</i>		X
<b>5</b> Is the organization a section 501(c)(4), 501(c)(5), or 501(c)(6) organization that receives membership dues, assessments, or similar amounts as defined in Revenue Procedure 98-19? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule C, Part III</i>		X
<b>6</b> Did the organization maintain any donor advised funds or any similar funds or accounts for which donors have the right to provide advice on the distribution or investment of amounts in such funds or accounts? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule D, Part I</i>		X
<b>7</b> Did the organization receive or hold a conservation easement, including easements to preserve open space, the environment, historic land areas, or historic structures? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule D, Part II</i>	X	
<b>8</b> Did the organization maintain collections of works of art, historical treasures, or other similar assets? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule D, Part III</i>		X
<b>9</b> Did the organization report an amount in Part X, line 21, for escrow or custodial account liability, serve as a custodian for amounts not listed in Part X; or provide credit counseling, debt management, credit repair, or debt negotiation services? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule D, Part IV</i>		X
<b>10</b> Did the organization, directly or through a related organization, hold assets in temporarily restricted endowments, permanent endowments, or quasi-endowments? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule D, Part V</i>	X	
<b>11</b> If the organization's answer to any of the following questions is "Yes," then complete Schedule D, Parts VI, VII, VIII, IX, or X as applicable.		
<b>a</b> Did the organization report an amount for land, buildings, and equipment in Part X, line 10? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule D, Part VI</i>	X	
<b>b</b> Did the organization report an amount for investments - other securities in Part X, line 12 that is 5% or more of its total assets reported in Part X, line 16? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule D, Part VII</i>	X	
<b>c</b> Did the organization report an amount for investments - program related in Part X, line 13 that is 5% or more of its total assets reported in Part X, line 16? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule D, Part VIII</i>		X
<b>d</b> Did the organization report an amount for other assets in Part X, line 15 that is 5% or more of its total assets reported in Part X, line 16? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule D, Part IX</i>		X
<b>e</b> Did the organization report an amount for other liabilities in Part X, line 25? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule D, Part X</i>		X
<b>f</b> Did the organization's separate or consolidated financial statements for the tax year include a footnote that addresses the organization's liability for uncertain tax positions under FIN 48 (ASC 740)? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule D, Part X</i>	X	
<b>12a</b> Did the organization obtain separate, independent audited financial statements for the tax year? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule D, Parts XI and XII</i>	X	
<b>b</b> Was the organization included in consolidated, independent audited financial statements for the tax year? <i>If "Yes," and if the organization answered "No" to line 12a, then completing Schedule D, Parts XI and XII is optional</i>		X
<b>13</b> Is the organization a school described in section 170(b)(1)(A)(ii)? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule E</i>		X
<b>14a</b> Did the organization maintain an office, employees, or agents outside of the United States?		X
<b>b</b> Did the organization have aggregate revenues or expenses of more than \$10,000 from grantmaking, fundraising, business, investment, and program service activities outside the United States, or aggregate foreign investments valued at \$100,000 or more? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule F, Parts I and IV</i>		X
<b>15</b> Did the organization report on Part IX, column (A), line 3, more than \$5,000 of grants or other assistance to or for any foreign organization? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule F, Parts II and IV</i>		X
<b>16</b> Did the organization report on Part IX, column (A), line 3, more than \$5,000 of aggregate grants or other assistance to or for foreign individuals? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule F, Parts III and IV</i>		X
<b>17</b> Did the organization report a total of more than \$15,000 of expenses for professional fundraising services on Part IX, column (A), lines 6 and 11e? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule G, Part I</i>		X
<b>18</b> Did the organization report more than \$15,000 total of fundraising event gross income and contributions on Part VIII, lines 1c and 8a? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule G, Part II</i>	X	
<b>19</b> Did the organization report more than \$15,000 of gross income from gaming activities on Part VIII, line 9a? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule G, Part III</i>		X

**Part IV Checklist of Required Schedules** (continued)

	Yes	No
<b>20a</b> Did the organization operate one or more hospital facilities? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule H</i> .....		X
<b>b</b> If "Yes" to line 20a, did the organization attach a copy of its audited financial statements to this return? .....		
<b>21</b> Did the organization report more than \$5,000 of grants or other assistance to any domestic organization or domestic government on Part IX, column (A), line 1? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule I, Parts I and II</i> .....	X	
<b>22</b> Did the organization report more than \$5,000 of grants or other assistance to or for domestic individuals on Part IX, column (A), line 2? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule I, Parts I and III</i> .....		X
<b>23</b> Did the organization answer "Yes" to Part VII, Section A, line 3, 4, or 5 about compensation of the organization's current and former officers, directors, trustees, key employees, and highest compensated employees? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule J</i> .....		X
<b>24a</b> Did the organization have a tax-exempt bond issue with an outstanding principal amount of more than \$100,000 as of the last day of the year, that was issued after December 31, 2002? <i>If "Yes," answer lines 24b through 24d and complete Schedule K. If "No," go to line 25a</i> .....		X
<b>b</b> Did the organization invest any proceeds of tax-exempt bonds beyond a temporary period exception? .....		
<b>c</b> Did the organization maintain an escrow account other than a refunding escrow at any time during the year to defease any tax-exempt bonds? .....		
<b>d</b> Did the organization act as an "on behalf of" issuer for bonds outstanding at any time during the year? .....		
<b>25a</b> <b>Section 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4), and 501(c)(29) organizations.</b> Did the organization engage in an excess benefit transaction with a disqualified person during the year? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule L, Part I</i> .....		X
<b>b</b> Is the organization aware that it engaged in an excess benefit transaction with a disqualified person in a prior year, and that the transaction has not been reported on any of the organization's prior Forms 990 or 990-EZ? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule L, Part I</i> .....		X
<b>26</b> Did the organization report any amount on Part X, line 5, 6, or 22 for receivables from or payables to any current or former officers, directors, trustees, key employees, highest compensated employees, or disqualified persons? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule L, Part II</i> .....		X
<b>27</b> Did the organization provide a grant or other assistance to an officer, director, trustee, key employee, substantial contributor or employee thereof, a grant selection committee member, or to a 35% controlled entity or family member of any of these persons? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule L, Part III</i> .....		X
<b>28</b> Was the organization a party to a business transaction with one of the following parties (see Schedule L, Part IV instructions for applicable filing thresholds, conditions, and exceptions):		
<b>a</b> A current or former officer, director, trustee, or key employee? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule L, Part IV</i> .....		X
<b>b</b> A family member of a current or former officer, director, trustee, or key employee? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule L, Part IV</i> .....		X
<b>c</b> An entity of which a current or former officer, director, trustee, or key employee (or a family member thereof) was an officer, director, trustee, or direct or indirect owner? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule L, Part IV</i> .....		X
<b>29</b> Did the organization receive more than \$25,000 in non-cash contributions? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule M</i> .....	X	
<b>30</b> Did the organization receive contributions of art, historical treasures, or other similar assets, or qualified conservation contributions? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule M</i> .....		X
<b>31</b> Did the organization liquidate, terminate, or dissolve and cease operations? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule N, Part I</i> .....		X
<b>32</b> Did the organization sell, exchange, dispose of, or transfer more than 25% of its net assets? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule N, Part II</i> .....		X
<b>33</b> Did the organization own 100% of an entity disregarded as separate from the organization under Regulations sections 301.7701-2 and 301.7701-3? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule R, Part I</i> .....		X
<b>34</b> Was the organization related to any tax-exempt or taxable entity? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule R, Part II, III, or IV, and Part V, line 1</i> .....		X
<b>35a</b> Did the organization have a controlled entity within the meaning of section 512(b)(13)? .....		X
<b>b</b> If "Yes" to line 35a, did the organization receive any payment from or engage in any transaction with a controlled entity within the meaning of section 512(b)(13)? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule R, Part V, line 2</i> .....		
<b>36</b> <b>Section 501(c)(3) organizations.</b> Did the organization make any transfers to an exempt non-charitable related organization? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule R, Part V, line 2</i> .....		X
<b>37</b> Did the organization conduct more than 5% of its activities through an entity that is not a related organization and that is treated as a partnership for federal income tax purposes? <i>If "Yes," complete Schedule R, Part VI</i> .....		X
<b>38</b> Did the organization complete Schedule O and provide explanations in Schedule O for Part VI, lines 11b and 19? <b>Note.</b> All Form 990 filers are required to complete Schedule O .....	X	

Part V Statements Regarding Other IRS Filings and Tax Compliance

Check if Schedule O contains a response or note to any line in this Part V

Main form area containing questions 1a through 14b with input fields and Yes/No columns.

**Part VI Governance, Management, and Disclosure** For each "Yes" response to lines 2 through 7b below, and for a "No" response to line 8a, 8b, or 10b below, describe the circumstances, processes, or changes in Schedule O. See instructions.

Check if Schedule O contains a response or note to any line in this Part VI

**Section A. Governing Body and Management**

		Yes	No
<b>1a</b>	Enter the number of voting members of the governing body at the end of the tax year If there are material differences in voting rights among members of the governing body, or if the governing body delegated broad authority to an executive committee or similar committee, explain in Schedule O.		
	1a	17	
<b>b</b>	Enter the number of voting members included in line 1a, above, who are independent		
	1b	17	
<b>2</b>	Did any officer, director, trustee, or key employee have a family relationship or a business relationship with any other officer, director, trustee, or key employee?		X
<b>3</b>	Did the organization delegate control over management duties customarily performed by or under the direct supervision of officers, directors, or trustees, or key employees to a management company or other person?		X
<b>4</b>	Did the organization make any significant changes to its governing documents since the prior Form 990 was filed?		X
<b>5</b>	Did the organization become aware during the year of a significant diversion of the organization's assets?		X
<b>6</b>	Did the organization have members or stockholders?		X
<b>7a</b>	Did the organization have members, stockholders, or other persons who had the power to elect or appoint one or more members of the governing body?		X
<b>b</b>	Are any governance decisions of the organization reserved to (or subject to approval by) members, stockholders, or persons other than the governing body?		X
<b>8</b>	Did the organization contemporaneously document the meetings held or written actions undertaken during the year by the following:		
<b>a</b>	The governing body?	X	
<b>b</b>	Each committee with authority to act on behalf of the governing body?	X	
<b>9</b>	Is there any officer, director, trustee, or key employee listed in Part VII, Section A, who cannot be reached at the organization's mailing address? If "Yes," provide the names and addresses in Schedule O		X

**Section B. Policies** (This Section B requests information about policies not required by the Internal Revenue Code.)

		Yes	No
<b>10a</b>	Did the organization have local chapters, branches, or affiliates?		X
<b>b</b>	If "Yes," did the organization have written policies and procedures governing the activities of such chapters, affiliates, and branches to ensure their operations are consistent with the organization's exempt purposes?		
<b>10b</b>			
<b>11a</b>	Has the organization provided a complete copy of this Form 990 to all members of its governing body before filing the form?	X	
<b>b</b>	Describe in Schedule O the process, if any, used by the organization to review this Form 990.		
<b>12a</b>	Did the organization have a written conflict of interest policy? If "No," go to line 13	X	
<b>b</b>	Were officers, directors, or trustees, and key employees required to disclose annually interests that could give rise to conflicts?	X	
<b>c</b>	Did the organization regularly and consistently monitor and enforce compliance with the policy? If "Yes," describe in Schedule O how this was done	X	
<b>12c</b>			
<b>13</b>	Did the organization have a written whistleblower policy?	X	
<b>14</b>	Did the organization have a written document retention and destruction policy?	X	
<b>15</b>	Did the process for determining compensation of the following persons include a review and approval by independent persons, comparability data, and contemporaneous substantiation of the deliberation and decision?		
<b>a</b>	The organization's CEO, Executive Director, or top management official	X	
<b>b</b>	Other officers or key employees of the organization	X	
	If "Yes" to line 15a or 15b, describe the process in Schedule O (see instructions).		
<b>16a</b>	Did the organization invest in, contribute assets to, or participate in a joint venture or similar arrangement with a taxable entity during the year?		X
<b>b</b>	If "Yes," did the organization follow a written policy or procedure requiring the organization to evaluate its participation in joint venture arrangements under applicable federal tax law, and take steps to safeguard the organization's exempt status with respect to such arrangements?		
<b>16b</b>			

**Section C. Disclosure**

- 17** List the states with which a copy of this Form 990 is required to be filed **AL, AK, AR, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, HI, IL, KS, KY**
- 18** Section 6104 requires an organization to make its Forms 1023 (or 1024 if applicable), 990, and 990-T (Section 501(c)(3)s only) available for public inspection. Indicate how you made these available. Check all that apply.  
 Own website     Another's website     Upon request     Other (explain in Schedule O)
- 19** Describe in Schedule O whether (and if so, how) the organization made its governing documents, conflict of interest policy, and financial statements available to the public during the tax year.
- 20** State the name, address, and telephone number of the person who possesses the organization's books and records: **RYAN LUTEY - 406-549-8650**  
**20 FORT MISSOULA ROAD, MISSOULA, MT 59804-7202**

**Part VII Compensation of Officers, Directors, Trustees, Key Employees, Highest Compensated Employees, and Independent Contractors**

Check if Schedule O contains a response or note to any line in this Part VII

**Section A. Officers, Directors, Trustees, Key Employees, and Highest Compensated Employees**

**1a** Complete this table for all persons required to be listed. Report compensation for the calendar year ending with or within the organization's tax year.

- List all of the organization's **current** officers, directors, trustees (whether individuals or organizations), regardless of amount of compensation. Enter -0- in columns (D), (E), and (F) if no compensation was paid.
- List all of the organization's **current** key employees, if any. See instructions for definition of "key employee."
- List the organization's five **current** highest compensated employees (other than an officer, director, trustee, or key employee) who received reportable compensation (Box 5 of Form W-2 and/or Box 7 of Form 1099-MISC) of more than \$100,000 from the organization and any related organizations.
- List all of the organization's **former** officers, key employees, and highest compensated employees who received more than \$100,000 of reportable compensation from the organization and any related organizations.
- List all of the organization's **former directors or trustees** that received, in the capacity as a former director or trustee of the organization, more than \$10,000 of reportable compensation from the organization and any related organizations.

List persons in the following order: individual trustees or directors; institutional trustees; officers; key employees; highest compensated employees; and former such persons.

Check this box if neither the organization nor any related organization compensated any current officer, director, or trustee.

(A) Name and Title	(B) Average hours per week (list any hours for related organizations below line)	(C) Position (do not check more than one box, unless person is both an officer and a director/trustee)						(D) Reportable compensation from the organization (W-2/1099-MISC)	(E) Reportable compensation from related organizations (W-2/1099-MISC)	(F) Estimated amount of other compensation from the organization and related organizations
		Individual trustee or director	Institutional trustee	Officer	Key employee	Highest compensated employee	Former			
(1) STUART STRAHL CHAIRMAN	8.00	X		X				0.	0.	0.
(2) KELLY JOHNSON VICE CHAIRMAN	2.00	X		X				0.	0.	0.
(3) DAVID WESLEY SECRETARY	2.00	X		X				0.	0.	0.
(4) CHARLIE EISEMAN TREASURER	2.00	X		X				0.	0.	0.
(5) WALLY BECKY TRUSTEE	2.00	X						0.	0.	0.
(6) JACK CAPP TRUSTEE	4.00	X						0.	0.	0.
(7) DOUG CHADWICK TRUSTEE	20.00	X						0.	0.	0.
(8) JOHN HECHTEL TRUSTEE	2.00	X						0.	0.	0.
(9) SOU BARRETT TRUSTEE	3.00	X						0.	0.	0.
(10) MAUREEN MAYER TRUSTEE	2.00	X						0.	0.	0.
(11) LYNNE SEUS TRUSTEE	5.00	X						0.	0.	0.
(12) SALLY SMYTH TRUSTEE	5.00	X						0.	0.	0.
(13) DEBI STRONG TRUSTEE	3.00	X						0.	0.	0.
(14) THERESA YOUNG TRUSTEE	1.00	X						0.	0.	0.
(15) MEGGEN WILSON TRUSTEE	1.00	X						0.	0.	0.
(16) ANDREA NASI TRUSTEE	18.00	X						0.	0.	0.
(17) RUSSELL FOX TRUSTEE	2.00	X						0.	0.	0.

Part VII Section A. Officers, Directors, Trustees, Key Employees, and Highest Compensated Employees (continued)

Table with 6 main columns: (A) Name and title, (B) Average hours per week, (C) Position, (D) Reportable compensation from the organization, (E) Reportable compensation from related organizations, (F) Estimated amount of other compensation. Includes entry for RYAN LUTEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.

2 Total number of individuals (including but not limited to those listed above) who received more than \$100,000 of reportable compensation from the organization 0

Table with 3 columns: Question number, Question text, Yes/No columns. Contains questions 3, 4, and 5 regarding compensation reporting.

Section B. Independent Contractors

1 Complete this table for your five highest compensated independent contractors that received more than \$100,000 of compensation from the organization. Report compensation for the calendar year ending with or within the organization's tax year.

Table with 3 columns: (A) Name and business address, (B) Description of services, (C) Compensation. Includes a 'NONE' entry in column A.

2 Total number of independent contractors (including but not limited to those listed above) who received more than \$100,000 of compensation from the organization 0



**Part VIII Statement of Revenue**

Check if Schedule O contains a response or note to any line in this Part VIII

		(A) Total revenue	(B) Related or exempt function revenue	(C) Unrelated business revenue	(D) Revenue excluded from tax under sections 512 - 514	
<b>Contributions, Gifts, Grants and Other Similar Amounts</b>	<b>1 a</b> Federated campaigns .....	<b>1a</b>				
	<b>b</b> Membership dues .....	<b>1b</b> 33,223.				
	<b>c</b> Fundraising events .....	<b>1c</b>				
	<b>d</b> Related organizations .....	<b>1d</b>				
	<b>e</b> Government grants (contributions) .....	<b>1e</b> 49,250.				
	<b>f</b> All other contributions, gifts, grants, and similar amounts not included above .....	<b>1f</b> 1,890,370.				
	<b>g</b> Noncash contributions included in lines 1a-1f: \$ .....	223,354.				
	<b>h Total.</b> Add lines 1a-1f .....	▶ 1,972,843.				
<b>Program Service Revenue</b>	<b>2 a</b> _____	<b>Business Code</b>				
	<b>b</b> _____					
	<b>c</b> _____					
	<b>d</b> _____					
	<b>e</b> _____					
	<b>f</b> All other program service revenue .....					
	<b>g Total.</b> Add lines 2a-2f .....	▶				
<b>Other Revenue</b>	<b>3</b> Investment income (including dividends, interest, and other similar amounts) .....	▶ 3,142.			3,142.	
	<b>4</b> Income from investment of tax-exempt bond proceeds .....	▶				
	<b>5</b> Royalties .....	▶				
	<b>6 a</b> Gross rents .....	(i) Real				
		(ii) Personal				
		<b>b</b> Less: rental expenses .....				
		<b>c</b> Rental income or (loss) .....				
	<b>d</b> Net rental income or (loss) .....	▶				
	<b>7 a</b> Gross amount from sales of assets other than inventory .....	(i) Securities	71,727.			
		(ii) Other				
		<b>b</b> Less: cost or other basis and sales expenses .....	72,526.			
		<b>c</b> Gain or (loss) .....	-799.			
	<b>d</b> Net gain or (loss) .....	▶ -799.			-799.	
	<b>8 a</b> Gross income from fundraising events (not including \$ _____ of contributions reported on line 1c). See Part IV, line 18 .....	<b>a</b> 163,185.				
		<b>b</b> Less: direct expenses .....	125,698.			
<b>c</b> Net income or (loss) from fundraising events .....		▶ 37,487.			37,487.	
<b>9 a</b> Gross income from gaming activities. See Part IV, line 19 .....	<b>a</b>					
	<b>b</b> Less: direct expenses .....	<b>b</b>				
	<b>c</b> Net income or (loss) from gaming activities .....	▶				
<b>10 a</b> Gross sales of inventory, less returns and allowances .....	<b>a</b> 15,704.					
	<b>b</b> Less: cost of goods sold .....	11,714.				
	<b>c</b> Net income or (loss) from sales of inventory .....	▶ 3,990.			3,990.	
Miscellaneous Revenue		<b>Business Code</b>				
<b>11 a OTHER REVENUE</b>	900099	8,034.	8,034.			
	<b>b</b> _____					
	<b>c</b> _____					
	<b>d</b> All other revenue .....					
	<b>e Total.</b> Add lines 11a-11d .....	▶ 8,034.				
<b>12 Total revenue.</b> See instructions. ....	▶ 2,024,697.	8,034.	0.	43,820.		

**Part IX Statement of Functional Expenses**

Section 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations must complete all columns. All other organizations must complete column (A).

Check if Schedule O contains a response or note to any line in this Part IX

Do not include amounts reported on lines 6b, 7b, 8b, 9b, and 10b of Part VIII.	(A) Total expenses	(B) Program service expenses	(C) Management and general expenses	(D) Fundraising expenses
1 Grants and other assistance to domestic organizations and domestic governments. See Part IV, line 21 ...	57,825.	57,825.		
2 Grants and other assistance to domestic individuals. See Part IV, line 22 .....				
3 Grants and other assistance to foreign organizations, foreign governments, and foreign individuals. See Part IV, lines 15 and 16 .....				
4 Benefits paid to or for members .....				
5 Compensation of current officers, directors, trustees, and key employees .....	90,325.	45,163.	22,581.	22,581.
6 Compensation not included above, to disqualified persons (as defined under section 4958(f)(1)) and persons described in section 4958(c)(3)(B) .....				
7 Other salaries and wages .....	336,725.	257,539.	33,223.	45,963.
8 Pension plan accruals and contributions (include section 401(k) and 403(b) employer contributions)				
9 Other employee benefits .....	19,090.	14,058.	2,194.	2,838.
10 Payroll taxes .....	31,925.	22,667.	4,150.	5,108.
11 Fees for services (non-employees):				
a Management .....				
b Legal .....				
c Accounting .....				
d Lobbying .....				
e Professional fundraising services. See Part IV, line 17				
f Investment management fees .....				
g Other. (If line 11g amount exceeds 10% of line 25, column (A) amount, list line 11g expenses on Sch O.)	65,754.	44,335.	16,680.	4,739.
12 Advertising and promotion .....	29,535.	29,535.		
13 Office expenses .....	108,797.	62,323.	12,554.	33,920.
14 Information technology .....				
15 Royalties .....				
16 Occupancy .....	30,757.	15,379.	7,689.	7,689.
17 Travel .....	28,243.	18,285.	1,536.	8,422.
18 Payments of travel or entertainment expenses for any federal, state, or local public officials				
19 Conferences, conventions, and meetings .....				
20 Interest .....	1,040.	1,040.		
21 Payments to affiliates .....				
22 Depreciation, depletion, and amortization .....	4,274.	1,871.	1,468.	935.
23 Insurance .....	10,980.	8,947.	1,242.	791.
24 Other expenses. Itemize expenses not covered above. (List miscellaneous expenses in line 24e. If line 24e amount exceeds 10% of line 25, column (A) amount, list line 24e expenses on Schedule O.)				
a <b>CONSERVATION EASEMENT A</b>	199,999.	199,999.		
b <b>GIFTS</b>	13,033.	10,595.	1,594.	844.
c <b>LICENSES &amp; TAXES</b>	10,760.	10,760.		
d <b>MEALS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT</b>	10,356.	6,531.	1,228.	2,597.
e All other expenses	21,401.	17,037.	2,561.	1,803.
<b>25 Total functional expenses.</b> Add lines 1 through 24e	<b>1,070,819.</b>	<b>823,889.</b>	<b>108,700.</b>	<b>138,230.</b>
<b>26 Joint costs.</b> Complete this line only if the organization reported in column (B) joint costs from a combined educational campaign and fundraising solicitation.				

Check here  if following SOP 98-2 (ASC 958-720)

**Part X Balance Sheet**

Check if Schedule O contains a response or note to any line in this Part X

		(A) Beginning of year		(B) End of year
<b>Assets</b>	<b>1</b> Cash - non-interest-bearing .....	579,418.	<b>1</b>	809,132.
	<b>2</b> Savings and temporary cash investments .....	0.	<b>2</b>	320,686.
	<b>3</b> Pledges and grants receivable, net .....		<b>3</b>	
	<b>4</b> Accounts receivable, net .....		<b>4</b>	
	<b>5</b> Loans and other receivables from current and former officers, directors, trustees, key employees, and highest compensated employees. Complete Part II of Schedule L .....		<b>5</b>	
	<b>6</b> Loans and other receivables from other disqualified persons (as defined under section 4958(f)(1)), persons described in section 4958(c)(3)(B), and contributing employers and sponsoring organizations of section 501(c)(9) voluntary employees' beneficiary organizations (see instr). Complete Part II of Sch L .....		<b>6</b>	
	<b>7</b> Notes and loans receivable, net .....		<b>7</b>	
	<b>8</b> Inventories for sale or use .....	15,856.	<b>8</b>	16,856.
	<b>9</b> Prepaid expenses and deferred charges .....	5,091.	<b>9</b>	5,091.
	<b>10a</b> Land, buildings, and equipment: cost or other basis. Complete Part VI of Schedule D .....	<b>10a</b> 3,987,191.		
	<b>b</b> Less: accumulated depreciation .....	<b>10b</b> 37,585.	3,330,375.	<b>10c</b> 3,949,606.
	<b>11</b> Investments - publicly traded securities .....		<b>11</b>	
	<b>12</b> Investments - other securities. See Part IV, line 11 .....	827,353.	<b>12</b>	826,683.
	<b>13</b> Investments - program-related. See Part IV, line 11 .....		<b>13</b>	
	<b>14</b> Intangible assets .....		<b>14</b>	
	<b>15</b> Other assets. See Part IV, line 11 .....	126,525.	<b>15</b>	145,992.
<b>16 Total assets.</b> Add lines 1 through 15 (must equal line 34) .....	4,884,618.	<b>16</b>	6,074,046.	
<b>Liabilities</b>	<b>17</b> Accounts payable and accrued expenses .....	17,697.	<b>17</b>	29,924.
	<b>18</b> Grants payable .....		<b>18</b>	
	<b>19</b> Deferred revenue .....		<b>19</b>	
	<b>20</b> Tax-exempt bond liabilities .....		<b>20</b>	
	<b>21</b> Escrow or custodial account liability. Complete Part IV of Schedule D .....		<b>21</b>	
	<b>22</b> Loans and other payables to current and former officers, directors, trustees, key employees, highest compensated employees, and disqualified persons. Complete Part II of Schedule L .....		<b>22</b>	
	<b>23</b> Secured mortgages and notes payable to unrelated third parties .....	27,410.	<b>23</b>	151,975.
	<b>24</b> Unsecured notes and loans payable to unrelated third parties .....		<b>24</b>	
	<b>25</b> Other liabilities (including federal income tax, payables to related third parties, and other liabilities not included on lines 17-24). Complete Part X of Schedule D .....		<b>25</b>	
	<b>26 Total liabilities.</b> Add lines 17 through 25 .....	45,107.	<b>26</b>	181,899.
<b>Net Assets or Fund Balances</b>	<b>Organizations that follow SFAS 117 (ASC 958), check here <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> and complete lines 27 through 29, and lines 33 and 34.</b>			
	<b>27</b> Unrestricted net assets .....	2,208,594.	<b>27</b>	2,052,004.
	<b>28</b> Temporarily restricted net assets .....	1,326,848.	<b>28</b>	2,483,269.
	<b>29</b> Permanently restricted net assets .....	1,304,069.	<b>29</b>	1,356,874.
	<b>Organizations that do not follow SFAS 117 (ASC 958), check here <input type="checkbox"/> and complete lines 30 through 34.</b>			
	<b>30</b> Capital stock or trust principal, or current funds .....		<b>30</b>	
	<b>31</b> Paid-in or capital surplus, or land, building, or equipment fund .....		<b>31</b>	
	<b>32</b> Retained earnings, endowment, accumulated income, or other funds .....		<b>32</b>	
<b>33</b> Total net assets or fund balances .....	4,839,511.	<b>33</b>	5,892,147.	
<b>34</b> Total liabilities and net assets/fund balances .....	4,884,618.	<b>34</b>	6,074,046.	

**Part XI Reconciliation of Net Assets**

Check if Schedule O contains a response or note to any line in this Part XI

1	Total revenue (must equal Part VIII, column (A), line 12)	1	2,024,697.
2	Total expenses (must equal Part IX, column (A), line 25)	2	1,070,819.
3	Revenue less expenses. Subtract line 2 from line 1	3	953,878.
4	Net assets or fund balances at beginning of year (must equal Part X, line 33, column (A))	4	4,839,511.
5	Net unrealized gains (losses) on investments	5	98,758.
6	Donated services and use of facilities	6	
7	Investment expenses	7	
8	Prior period adjustments	8	
9	Other changes in net assets or fund balances (explain in Schedule O)	9	0.
10	Net assets or fund balances at end of year. Combine lines 3 through 9 (must equal Part X, line 33, column (B))	10	5,892,147.

**Part XII Financial Statements and Reporting**

Check if Schedule O contains a response or note to any line in this Part XII

- 1 Accounting method used to prepare the Form 990:  Cash  Accrual  Other \_\_\_\_\_  
If the organization changed its method of accounting from a prior year or checked "Other," explain in Schedule O.
- 2a Were the organization's financial statements compiled or reviewed by an independent accountant? .....  
If "Yes," check a box below to indicate whether the financial statements for the year were compiled or reviewed on a separate basis, consolidated basis, or both:  
 Separate basis  Consolidated basis  Both consolidated and separate basis
- b Were the organization's financial statements audited by an independent accountant? .....  
If "Yes," check a box below to indicate whether the financial statements for the year were audited on a separate basis, consolidated basis, or both:  
 Separate basis  Consolidated basis  Both consolidated and separate basis
- c If "Yes" to line 2a or 2b, does the organization have a committee that assumes responsibility for oversight of the audit, review, or compilation of its financial statements and selection of an independent accountant? .....  
If the organization changed either its oversight process or selection process during the tax year, explain in Schedule O.
- 3a As a result of a federal award, was the organization required to undergo an audit or audits as set forth in the Single Audit Act and OMB Circular A-133? .....
- b If "Yes," did the organization undergo the required audit or audits? If the organization did not undergo the required audit or audits, explain why in Schedule O and describe any steps taken to undergo such audits .....

	Yes	No
2a		X
2b	X	
2c	X	
3a		X
3b		

**SCHEDULE A**  
**(Form 990 or 990-EZ)**

Department of the Treasury  
Internal Revenue Service

**Public Charity Status and Public Support**

Complete if the organization is a section 501(c)(3) organization or a section 4947(a)(1) nonexempt charitable trust.

▶ Attach to Form 990 or Form 990-EZ.

▶ Go to [www.irs.gov/Form990](http://www.irs.gov/Form990) for instructions and the latest information.

OMB No. 1545-0047

**2017**

Open to Public  
Inspection

<b>Name of the organization</b> <p style="text-align:center">THE VITAL GROUND FOUNDATION, INC.</p>	<b>Employer identification number</b> <p style="text-align:center">87-0483446</p>
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**Part I Reason for Public Charity Status** (All organizations must complete this part.) See instructions.

The organization is not a private foundation because it is: (For lines 1 through 12, check only one box.)

- 1  A church, convention of churches, or association of churches described in **section 170(b)(1)(A)(i).**
- 2  A school described in **section 170(b)(1)(A)(ii).** (Attach Schedule E (Form 990 or 990-EZ).)
- 3  A hospital or a cooperative hospital service organization described in **section 170(b)(1)(A)(iii).**
- 4  A medical research organization operated in conjunction with a hospital described in **section 170(b)(1)(A)(iii).** Enter the hospital's name, city, and state: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5  An organization operated for the benefit of a college or university owned or operated by a governmental unit described in **section 170(b)(1)(A)(iv).** (Complete Part II.)
- 6  A federal, state, or local government or governmental unit described in **section 170(b)(1)(A)(v).**
- 7  An organization that normally receives a substantial part of its support from a governmental unit or from the general public described in **section 170(b)(1)(A)(vi).** (Complete Part II.)
- 8  A community trust described in **section 170(b)(1)(A)(vi).** (Complete Part II.)
- 9  An agricultural research organization described in **section 170(b)(1)(A)(ix)** operated in conjunction with a land-grant college or university or a non-land-grant college of agriculture (see instructions). Enter the name, city, and state of the college or university: \_\_\_\_\_
- 10  An organization that normally receives: (1) more than 33 1/3% of its support from contributions, membership fees, and gross receipts from activities related to its exempt functions - subject to certain exceptions, and (2) no more than 33 1/3% of its support from gross investment income and unrelated business taxable income (less section 511 tax) from businesses acquired by the organization after June 30, 1975. See **section 509(a)(2).** (Complete Part III.)
- 11  An organization organized and operated exclusively to test for public safety. See **section 509(a)(4).**
- 12  An organization organized and operated exclusively for the benefit of, to perform the functions of, or to carry out the purposes of one or more publicly supported organizations described in **section 509(a)(1)** or **section 509(a)(2).** See **section 509(a)(3).** Check the box in lines 12a through 12d that describes the type of supporting organization and complete lines 12e, 12f, and 12g.
  - a  **Type I.** A supporting organization operated, supervised, or controlled by its supported organization(s), typically by giving the supported organization(s) the power to regularly appoint or elect a majority of the directors or trustees of the supporting organization. **You must complete Part IV, Sections A and B.**
  - b  **Type II.** A supporting organization supervised or controlled in connection with its supported organization(s), by having control or management of the supporting organization vested in the same persons that control or manage the supported organization(s). **You must complete Part IV, Sections A and C.**
  - c  **Type III functionally integrated.** A supporting organization operated in connection with, and functionally integrated with, its supported organization(s) (see instructions). **You must complete Part IV, Sections A, D, and E.**
  - d  **Type III non-functionally integrated.** A supporting organization operated in connection with its supported organization(s) that is not functionally integrated. The organization generally must satisfy a distribution requirement and an attentiveness requirement (see instructions). **You must complete Part IV, Sections A and D, and Part V.**
  - e  Check this box if the organization received a written determination from the IRS that it is a Type I, Type II, Type III functionally integrated, or Type III non-functionally integrated supporting organization.
  - f Enter the number of supported organizations .....
- g Provide the following information about the supported organization(s).

(i) Name of supported organization	(ii) EIN	(iii) Type of organization (described on lines 1-10 above (see instructions))	(iv) Is the organization listed in your governing document?		(v) Amount of monetary support (see instructions)	(vi) Amount of other support (see instructions)
			Yes	No		
<b>Total</b>						

**Part II Support Schedule for Organizations Described in Sections 170(b)(1)(A)(iv) and 170(b)(1)(A)(vi)**

(Complete only if you checked the box on line 5, 7, or 8 of Part I or if the organization failed to qualify under Part III. If the organization fails to qualify under the tests listed below, please complete Part III.)

**Section A. Public Support**

Calendar year (or fiscal year beginning in) ►	(a) 2013	(b) 2014	(c) 2015	(d) 2016	(e) 2017	(f) Total
<b>1</b> Gifts, grants, contributions, and membership fees received. (Do not include any "unusual grants.") .....	1451289.	1669844.	1399806.	713,485.	1972843.	7207267.
<b>2</b> Tax revenues levied for the organization's benefit and either paid to or expended on its behalf .....						
<b>3</b> The value of services or facilities furnished by a governmental unit to the organization without charge .....						
<b>4 Total.</b> Add lines 1 through 3 .....	1451289.	1669844.	1399806.	713,485.	1972843.	7207267.
<b>5</b> The portion of total contributions by each person (other than a governmental unit or publicly supported organization) included on line 1 that exceeds 2% of the amount shown on line 11, column (f) .....						445,036.
<b>6 Public support.</b> Subtract line 5 from line 4.						6762231.

**Section B. Total Support**

Calendar year (or fiscal year beginning in) ►	(a) 2013	(b) 2014	(c) 2015	(d) 2016	(e) 2017	(f) Total
<b>7</b> Amounts from line 4 .....	1451289.	1669844.	1399806.	713,485.	1972843.	7207267.
<b>8</b> Gross income from interest, dividends, payments received on securities loans, rents, royalties, and income from similar sources .....	2,793.	5,228.	1,392.	1,700.	3,142.	14,255.
<b>9</b> Net income from unrelated business activities, whether or not the business is regularly carried on .....						
<b>10</b> Other income. Do not include gain or loss from the sale of capital assets (Explain in Part VI.) .....						
<b>11 Total support.</b> Add lines 7 through 10						7221522.
<b>12</b> Gross receipts from related activities, etc. (see instructions) .....					12	192,840.
<b>13 First five years.</b> If the Form 990 is for the organization's first, second, third, fourth, or fifth tax year as a section 501(c)(3) organization, check this box and <b>stop here</b> .....						<input type="checkbox"/>

**Section C. Computation of Public Support Percentage**

<b>14</b> Public support percentage for 2017 (line 6, column (f) divided by line 11, column (f)) .....	<b>14</b>	93.64 %
<b>15</b> Public support percentage from 2016 Schedule A, Part II, line 14 .....	<b>15</b>	89.10 %
<b>16a 33 1/3% support test - 2017.</b> If the organization did not check the box on line 13, and line 14 is 33 1/3% or more, check this box and <b>stop here.</b> The organization qualifies as a publicly supported organization .....		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>b 33 1/3% support test - 2016.</b> If the organization did not check a box on line 13 or 16a, and line 15 is 33 1/3% or more, check this box and <b>stop here.</b> The organization qualifies as a publicly supported organization .....		<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>17a 10% -facts-and-circumstances test - 2017.</b> If the organization did not check a box on line 13, 16a, or 16b, and line 14 is 10% or more, and if the organization meets the "facts-and-circumstances" test, check this box and <b>stop here.</b> Explain in Part VI how the organization meets the "facts-and-circumstances" test. The organization qualifies as a publicly supported organization .....		<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>b 10% -facts-and-circumstances test - 2016.</b> If the organization did not check a box on line 13, 16a, 16b, or 17a, and line 15 is 10% or more, and if the organization meets the "facts-and-circumstances" test, check this box and <b>stop here.</b> Explain in Part VI how the organization meets the "facts-and-circumstances" test. The organization qualifies as a publicly supported organization .....		<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>18 Private foundation.</b> If the organization did not check a box on line 13, 16a, 16b, 17a, or 17b, check this box and see instructions .....		<input type="checkbox"/>

**Part III Support Schedule for Organizations Described in Section 509(a)(2)**

(Complete only if you checked the box on line 10 of Part I or if the organization failed to qualify under Part II. If the organization fails to qualify under the tests listed below, please complete Part II.)

**Section A. Public Support**

Calendar year (or fiscal year beginning in) ►	(a) 2013	(b) 2014	(c) 2015	(d) 2016	(e) 2017	(f) Total
<b>1</b> Gifts, grants, contributions, and membership fees received. (Do not include any "unusual grants.") .....						
<b>2</b> Gross receipts from admissions, merchandise sold or services performed, or facilities furnished in any activity that is related to the organization's tax-exempt purpose .....						
<b>3</b> Gross receipts from activities that are not an unrelated trade or business under section 513 .....						
<b>4</b> Tax revenues levied for the organization's benefit and either paid to or expended on its behalf .....						
<b>5</b> The value of services or facilities furnished by a governmental unit to the organization without charge .....						
<b>6 Total.</b> Add lines 1 through 5 .....						
<b>7a</b> Amounts included on lines 1, 2, and 3 received from disqualified persons .....						
<b>b</b> Amounts included on lines 2 and 3 received from other than disqualified persons that exceed the greater of \$5,000 or 1% of the amount on line 13 for the year .....						
<b>c</b> Add lines 7a and 7b .....						
<b>8 Public support.</b> (Subtract line 7c from line 6.)						

**Section B. Total Support**

Calendar year (or fiscal year beginning in) ►	(a) 2013	(b) 2014	(c) 2015	(d) 2016	(e) 2017	(f) Total
<b>9</b> Amounts from line 6 .....						
<b>10a</b> Gross income from interest, dividends, payments received on securities loans, rents, royalties, and income from similar sources .....						
<b>b</b> Unrelated business taxable income (less section 511 taxes) from businesses acquired after June 30, 1975 .....						
<b>c</b> Add lines 10a and 10b .....						
<b>11</b> Net income from unrelated business activities not included in line 10b, whether or not the business is regularly carried on .....						
<b>12</b> Other income. Do not include gain or loss from the sale of capital assets (Explain in Part VI.) .....						
<b>13 Total support.</b> (Add lines 9, 10c, 11, and 12.)						

**14 First five years.** If the Form 990 is for the organization's first, second, third, fourth, or fifth tax year as a section 501(c)(3) organization, check this box and **stop here**  ►

**Section C. Computation of Public Support Percentage**

<b>15</b> Public support percentage for 2017 (line 8, column (f) divided by line 13, column (f)) .....	<b>15</b>	%
<b>16</b> Public support percentage from 2016 Schedule A, Part III, line 15 .....	<b>16</b>	%

**Section D. Computation of Investment Income Percentage**

<b>17</b> Investment income percentage for 2017 (line 10c, column (f) divided by line 13, column (f)) .....	<b>17</b>	%
<b>18</b> Investment income percentage from 2016 Schedule A, Part III, line 17 .....	<b>18</b>	%

**19a 33 1/3% support tests - 2017.** If the organization did not check the box on line 14, and line 15 is more than 33 1/3%, and line 17 is not more than 33 1/3%, check this box and **stop here**. The organization qualifies as a publicly supported organization  ►

**b 33 1/3% support tests - 2016.** If the organization did not check a box on line 14 or line 19a, and line 16 is more than 33 1/3%, and line 18 is not more than 33 1/3%, check this box and **stop here**. The organization qualifies as a publicly supported organization  ►

**20 Private foundation.** If the organization did not check a box on line 14, 19a, or 19b, check this box and see instructions  ►

**Part IV Supporting Organizations**

(Complete only if you checked a box in line 12 on Part I. If you checked 12a of Part I, complete Sections A and B. If you checked 12b of Part I, complete Sections A and C. If you checked 12c of Part I, complete Sections A, D, and E. If you checked 12d of Part I, complete Sections A and D, and complete Part V.)

**Section A. All Supporting Organizations**

	Yes	No
<b>1</b> Are all of the organization's supported organizations listed by name in the organization's governing documents? <i>If "No," describe in Part VI how the supported organizations are designated. If designated by class or purpose, describe the designation. If historic and continuing relationship, explain.</i>		
<b>2</b> Did the organization have any supported organization that does not have an IRS determination of status under section 509(a)(1) or (2)? <i>If "Yes," explain in Part VI how the organization determined that the supported organization was described in section 509(a)(1) or (2).</i>		
<b>3a</b> Did the organization have a supported organization described in section 501(c)(4), (5), or (6)? <i>If "Yes," answer (b) and (c) below.</i>		
<b>b</b> Did the organization confirm that each supported organization qualified under section 501(c)(4), (5), or (6) and satisfied the public support tests under section 509(a)(2)? <i>If "Yes," describe in Part VI when and how the organization made the determination.</i>		
<b>c</b> Did the organization ensure that all support to such organizations was used exclusively for section 170(c)(2)(B) purposes? <i>If "Yes," explain in Part VI what controls the organization put in place to ensure such use.</i>		
<b>4a</b> Was any supported organization not organized in the United States ("foreign supported organization")? <i>If "Yes," and if you checked 12a or 12b in Part I, answer (b) and (c) below.</i>		
<b>b</b> Did the organization have ultimate control and discretion in deciding whether to make grants to the foreign supported organization? <i>If "Yes," describe in Part VI how the organization had such control and discretion despite being controlled or supervised by or in connection with its supported organizations.</i>		
<b>c</b> Did the organization support any foreign supported organization that does not have an IRS determination under sections 501(c)(3) and 509(a)(1) or (2)? <i>If "Yes," explain in Part VI what controls the organization used to ensure that all support to the foreign supported organization was used exclusively for section 170(c)(2)(B) purposes.</i>		
<b>5a</b> Did the organization add, substitute, or remove any supported organizations during the tax year? <i>If "Yes," answer (b) and (c) below (if applicable). Also, provide detail in Part VI, including (i) the names and EIN numbers of the supported organizations added, substituted, or removed; (ii) the reasons for each such action; (iii) the authority under the organization's organizing document authorizing such action; and (iv) how the action was accomplished (such as by amendment to the organizing document).</i>		
<b>b Type I or Type II only.</b> Was any added or substituted supported organization part of a class already designated in the organization's organizing document?		
<b>c Substitutions only.</b> Was the substitution the result of an event beyond the organization's control?		
<b>6</b> Did the organization provide support (whether in the form of grants or the provision of services or facilities) to anyone other than (i) its supported organizations, (ii) individuals that are part of the charitable class benefited by one or more of its supported organizations, or (iii) other supporting organizations that also support or benefit one or more of the filing organization's supported organizations? <i>If "Yes," provide detail in Part VI.</i>		
<b>7</b> Did the organization provide a grant, loan, compensation, or other similar payment to a substantial contributor (defined in section 4958(c)(3)(C)), a family member of a substantial contributor, or a 35% controlled entity with regard to a substantial contributor? <i>If "Yes," complete Part I of Schedule L (Form 990 or 990-EZ).</i>		
<b>8</b> Did the organization make a loan to a disqualified person (as defined in section 4958) not described in line 7? <i>If "Yes," complete Part I of Schedule L (Form 990 or 990-EZ).</i>		
<b>9a</b> Was the organization controlled directly or indirectly at any time during the tax year by one or more disqualified persons as defined in section 4946 (other than foundation managers and organizations described in section 509(a)(1) or (2))? <i>If "Yes," provide detail in Part VI.</i>		
<b>b</b> Did one or more disqualified persons (as defined in line 9a) hold a controlling interest in any entity in which the supporting organization had an interest? <i>If "Yes," provide detail in Part VI.</i>		
<b>c</b> Did a disqualified person (as defined in line 9a) have an ownership interest in, or derive any personal benefit from, assets in which the supporting organization also had an interest? <i>If "Yes," provide detail in Part VI.</i>		
<b>10a</b> Was the organization subject to the excess business holdings rules of section 4943 because of section 4943(f) (regarding certain Type II supporting organizations, and all Type III non-functionally integrated supporting organizations)? <i>If "Yes," answer 10b below.</i>		
<b>b</b> Did the organization have any excess business holdings in the tax year? <i>(Use Schedule C, Form 4720, to determine whether the organization had excess business holdings.)</i>		



**Part IV Supporting Organizations** (continued)

	Yes	No
<b>11</b> Has the organization accepted a gift or contribution from any of the following persons?		
<b>a</b> A person who directly or indirectly controls, either alone or together with persons described in (b) and (c) below, the governing body of a supported organization?		
<b>b</b> A family member of a person described in (a) above?		
<b>c</b> A 35% controlled entity of a person described in (a) or (b) above? <i>If "Yes" to a, b, or c, provide detail in Part VI.</i>		

**Section B. Type I Supporting Organizations**

	Yes	No
<b>1</b> Did the directors, trustees, or membership of one or more supported organizations have the power to regularly appoint or elect at least a majority of the organization's directors or trustees at all times during the tax year? <i>If "No," describe in Part VI how the supported organization(s) effectively operated, supervised, or controlled the organization's activities. If the organization had more than one supported organization, describe how the powers to appoint and/or remove directors or trustees were allocated among the supported organizations and what conditions or restrictions, if any, applied to such powers during the tax year.</i>		
<b>2</b> Did the organization operate for the benefit of any supported organization other than the supported organization(s) that operated, supervised, or controlled the supporting organization? <i>If "Yes," explain in Part VI how providing such benefit carried out the purposes of the supported organization(s) that operated, supervised, or controlled the supporting organization.</i>		

**Section C. Type II Supporting Organizations**

	Yes	No
<b>1</b> Were a majority of the organization's directors or trustees during the tax year also a majority of the directors or trustees of each of the organization's supported organization(s)? <i>If "No," describe in Part VI how control or management of the supporting organization was vested in the same persons that controlled or managed the supported organization(s).</i>		

**Section D. All Type III Supporting Organizations**

	Yes	No
<b>1</b> Did the organization provide to each of its supported organizations, by the last day of the fifth month of the organization's tax year, (i) a written notice describing the type and amount of support provided during the prior tax year, (ii) a copy of the Form 990 that was most recently filed as of the date of notification, and (iii) copies of the organization's governing documents in effect on the date of notification, to the extent not previously provided?		
<b>2</b> Were any of the organization's officers, directors, or trustees either (i) appointed or elected by the supported organization(s) or (ii) serving on the governing body of a supported organization? <i>If "No," explain in Part VI how the organization maintained a close and continuous working relationship with the supported organization(s).</i>		
<b>3</b> By reason of the relationship described in (2), did the organization's supported organizations have a significant voice in the organization's investment policies and in directing the use of the organization's income or assets at all times during the tax year? <i>If "Yes," describe in Part VI the role the organization's supported organizations played in this regard.</i>		

**Section E. Type III Functionally Integrated Supporting Organizations**

<b>1</b> Check the box next to the method that the organization used to satisfy the Integral Part Test during the year (see instructions).		
<b>a</b> <input type="checkbox"/> The organization satisfied the Activities Test. Complete line 2 below.		
<b>b</b> <input type="checkbox"/> The organization is the parent of each of its supported organizations. Complete line 3 below.		
<b>c</b> <input type="checkbox"/> The organization supported a governmental entity. Describe in Part VI how you supported a government entity (see instructions).		
<b>2</b> Activities Test. Answer (a) and (b) below.		
<b>a</b> Did substantially all of the organization's activities during the tax year directly further the exempt purposes of the supported organization(s) to which the organization was responsive? <i>If "Yes," then in Part VI identify those supported organizations and explain how these activities directly furthered their exempt purposes, how the organization was responsive to those supported organizations, and how the organization determined that these activities constituted substantially all of its activities.</i>		
<b>b</b> Did the activities described in (a) constitute activities that, but for the organization's involvement, one or more of the organization's supported organization(s) would have been engaged in? <i>If "Yes," explain in Part VI the reasons for the organization's position that its supported organization(s) would have engaged in these activities but for the organization's involvement.</i>		
<b>3</b> Parent of Supported Organizations. Answer (a) and (b) below.		
<b>a</b> Did the organization have the power to regularly appoint or elect a majority of the officers, directors, or trustees of each of the supported organizations? <i>Provide details in Part VI.</i>		
<b>b</b> Did the organization exercise a substantial degree of direction over the policies, programs, and activities of each of its supported organizations? <i>If "Yes," describe in Part VI the role played by the organization in this regard.</i>		

**Part V Type III Non-Functionally Integrated 509(a)(3) Supporting Organizations**

- 1  Check here if the organization satisfied the Integral Part Test as a qualifying trust on Nov. 20, 1970 (explain in Part VI.) **See instructions.** All other Type III non-functionally integrated supporting organizations must complete Sections A through E.

<b>Section A - Adjusted Net Income</b>		(A) Prior Year	(B) Current Year (optional)
1	Net short-term capital gain	1	
2	Recoveries of prior-year distributions	2	
3	Other gross income (see instructions)	3	
4	Add lines 1 through 3	4	
5	Depreciation and depletion	5	
6	Portion of operating expenses paid or incurred for production or collection of gross income or for management, conservation, or maintenance of property held for production of income (see instructions)	6	
7	Other expenses (see instructions)	7	
8	<b>Adjusted Net Income</b> (subtract lines 5, 6, and 7 from line 4)	8	

<b>Section B - Minimum Asset Amount</b>		(A) Prior Year	(B) Current Year (optional)
1	Aggregate fair market value of all non-exempt-use assets (see instructions for short tax year or assets held for part of year):		
a	Average monthly value of securities	1a	
b	Average monthly cash balances	1b	
c	Fair market value of other non-exempt-use assets	1c	
d	<b>Total</b> (add lines 1a, 1b, and 1c)	1d	
e	<b>Discount</b> claimed for blockage or other factors (explain in detail in <b>Part VI</b> ):		
2	Acquisition indebtedness applicable to non-exempt-use assets	2	
3	Subtract line 2 from line 1d	3	
4	Cash deemed held for exempt use. Enter 1-1/2% of line 3 (for greater amount, see instructions)	4	
5	Net value of non-exempt-use assets (subtract line 4 from line 3)	5	
6	Multiply line 5 by .035	6	
7	Recoveries of prior-year distributions	7	
8	<b>Minimum Asset Amount</b> (add line 7 to line 6)	8	

<b>Section C - Distributable Amount</b>			Current Year
1	Adjusted net income for prior year (from Section A, line 8, Column A)	1	
2	Enter 85% of line 1	2	
3	Minimum asset amount for prior year (from Section B, line 8, Column A)	3	
4	Enter greater of line 2 or line 3	4	
5	Income tax imposed in prior year	5	
6	<b>Distributable Amount.</b> Subtract line 5 from line 4, unless subject to emergency temporary reduction (see instructions)	6	
7	<input type="checkbox"/> Check here if the current year is the organization's first as a non-functionally integrated Type III supporting organization (see instructions).		

**Part V** Type III Non-Functionally Integrated 509(a)(3) Supporting Organizations (continued)

Section D - Distributions	Current Year
1 Amounts paid to supported organizations to accomplish exempt purposes	
2 Amounts paid to perform activity that directly furthers exempt purposes of supported organizations, in excess of income from activity	
3 Administrative expenses paid to accomplish exempt purposes of supported organizations	
4 Amounts paid to acquire exempt-use assets	
5 Qualified set-aside amounts (prior IRS approval required)	
6 Other distributions (describe in <b>Part VI</b> ). See instructions.	
7 <b>Total annual distributions.</b> Add lines 1 through 6.	
8 Distributions to attentive supported organizations to which the organization is responsive (provide details in <b>Part VI</b> ). See instructions.	
9 Distributable amount for 2017 from Section C, line 6	
10 Line 8 amount divided by line 9 amount	

Section E - Distribution Allocations (see instructions)	(i) Excess Distributions	(ii) Underdistributions Pre-2017	(iii) Distributable Amount for 2017
1 Distributable amount for 2017 from Section C, line 6			
2 Underdistributions, if any, for years prior to 2017 (reasonable cause required- explain in <b>Part VI</b> ). See instructions.			
3 Excess distributions carryover, if any, to 2017			
<b>a</b>			
<b>b</b> From 2013			
<b>c</b> From 2014			
<b>d</b> From 2015			
<b>e</b> From 2016			
<b>f</b> <b>Total</b> of lines 3a through e			
<b>g</b> Applied to underdistributions of prior years			
<b>h</b> Applied to 2017 distributable amount			
<b>i</b> Carryover from 2012 not applied (see instructions)			
<b>j</b> Remainder. Subtract lines 3g, 3h, and 3i from 3f.			
4 Distributions for 2017 from Section D, line 7: \$			
<b>a</b> Applied to underdistributions of prior years			
<b>b</b> Applied to 2017 distributable amount			
<b>c</b> Remainder. Subtract lines 4a and 4b from 4.			
5 Remaining underdistributions for years prior to 2017, if any. Subtract lines 3g and 4a from line 2. For result greater than zero, explain in <b>Part VI</b> . See instructions.			
6 Remaining underdistributions for 2017. Subtract lines 3h and 4b from line 1. For result greater than zero, explain in <b>Part VI</b> . See instructions.			
7 <b>Excess distributions carryover to 2018.</b> Add lines 3j and 4c.			
8 Breakdown of line 7:			
<b>a</b> Excess from 2013			
<b>b</b> Excess from 2014			
<b>c</b> Excess from 2015			
<b>d</b> Excess from 2016			
<b>e</b> Excess from 2017			



Schedule A

Identification of Excess Contributions Included on Part II, Line 5

2017

\*\* Do Not File \*\*

\*\*\* Not Open to Public Inspection \*\*\*

Contributor's Name	Total Contributions	Excess Contributions
CAROLYN DOBBS AND RUSS FOX	322,756.	178,326.
DAVID CUTLER	250,000.	105,570.
DONNA STEADMAN FAMILY TRUST	200,000.	55,570.
THE ALSAM FOUNDATION	250,000.	105,570.
Total Excess Contributions to Schedule A, Part II, Line 5 .....		445,036.

SCHEDULE D (Form 990)

Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service

Supplemental Financial Statements

Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11a, 11b, 11c, 11d, 11e, 11f, 12a, or 12b. Attach to Form 990.

Go to www.irs.gov/Form990 for instructions and the latest information.

OMB No. 1545-0047

2017

Open to Public Inspection

Name of the organization THE VITAL GROUND FOUNDATION, INC. Employer identification number 87-0483446

Part I Organizations Maintaining Donor Advised Funds or Other Similar Funds or Accounts. Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 6.

Table with 2 columns: (a) Donor advised funds, (b) Funds and other accounts. Rows include: 1 Total number at end of year, 2 Aggregate value of contributions to (during year), 3 Aggregate value of grants from (during year), 4 Aggregate value at end of year, 5 Did the organization inform all donors and donor advisors in writing that the assets held in donor advised funds are the organization's property, subject to the organization's exclusive legal control? (Yes/No), 6 Did the organization inform all grantees, donors, and donor advisors in writing that grant funds can be used only for charitable purposes and not for the benefit of the donor or donor advisor, or for any other purpose conferring impermissible private benefit? (Yes/No)

Part II Conservation Easements. Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 7.

1 Purpose(s) of conservation easements held by the organization (check all that apply): [ ] Preservation of land for public use (e.g., recreation or education), [ ] Preservation of a historically important land area, [X] Protection of natural habitat, [ ] Preservation of a certified historic structure, [X] Preservation of open space. 2 Complete lines 2a through 2d if the organization held a qualified conservation contribution in the form of a conservation easement on the last day of the tax year. Table: Held at the End of the Tax Year. 2a Total number of conservation easements: 18. 2b Total acreage restricted by conservation easements: 1,734.00. 2c Number of conservation easements on a certified historic structure included in (a). 2d Number of conservation easements included in (c) acquired after 7/25/06, and not on a historic structure listed in the National Register. 3 Number of conservation easements modified, transferred, released, extinguished, or terminated by the organization during the tax year: 0. 4 Number of states where property subject to conservation easement is located: 2. 5 Does the organization have a written policy regarding the periodic monitoring, inspection, handling of violations, and enforcement of the conservation easements it holds? [X] Yes [ ] No. 6 Staff and volunteer hours devoted to monitoring, inspecting, handling of violations, and enforcing conservation easements during the year: 185. 7 Amount of expenses incurred in monitoring, inspecting, handling of violations, and enforcing conservation easements during the year: \$ 6,648. 8 Does each conservation easement reported on line 2(d) above satisfy the requirements of section 170(h)(4)(B)(i) and section 170(h)(4)(B)(ii)? [ ] Yes [ ] No. 9 In Part XIII, describe how the organization reports conservation easements in its revenue and expense statement, and balance sheet, and include, if applicable, the text of the footnote to the organization's financial statements that describes the organization's accounting for conservation easements.

Part III Organizations Maintaining Collections of Art, Historical Treasures, or Other Similar Assets. Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 8.

1a If the organization elected, as permitted under SFAS 116 (ASC 958), not to report in its revenue statement and balance sheet works of art, historical treasures, or other similar assets held for public exhibition, education, or research in furtherance of public service, provide, in Part XIII, the text of the footnote to its financial statements that describes these items. b If the organization elected, as permitted under SFAS 116 (ASC 958), to report in its revenue statement and balance sheet works of art, historical treasures, or other similar assets held for public exhibition, education, or research in furtherance of public service, provide the following amounts relating to these items: (i) Revenue included on Form 990, Part VIII, line 1: \$ . (ii) Assets included in Form 990, Part X: \$ . 2 If the organization received or held works of art, historical treasures, or other similar assets for financial gain, provide the following amounts required to be reported under SFAS 116 (ASC 958) relating to these items: a Revenue included on Form 990, Part VIII, line 1: \$ . b Assets included in Form 990, Part X: \$ .

**Part III Organizations Maintaining Collections of Art, Historical Treasures, or Other Similar Assets** (continued)

3 Using the organization's acquisition, accession, and other records, check any of the following that are a significant use of its collection items (check all that apply):

- a  Public exhibition
- b  Scholarly research
- c  Preservation for future generations
- d  Loan or exchange programs
- e  Other \_\_\_\_\_

4 Provide a description of the organization's collections and explain how they further the organization's exempt purpose in Part XIII.

5 During the year, did the organization solicit or receive donations of art, historical treasures, or other similar assets to be sold to raise funds rather than to be maintained as part of the organization's collection?  Yes  No

**Part IV Escrow and Custodial Arrangements.** Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 9, or reported an amount on Form 990, Part X, line 21.

1a Is the organization an agent, trustee, custodian or other intermediary for contributions or other assets not included on Form 990, Part X?  Yes  No

b If "Yes," explain the arrangement in Part XIII and complete the following table:

	Amount
c Beginning balance	1c
d Additions during the year	1d
e Distributions during the year	1e
f Ending balance	1f

2a Did the organization include an amount on Form 990, Part X, line 21, for escrow or custodial account liability?  Yes  No

b If "Yes," explain the arrangement in Part XIII. Check here if the explanation has been provided on Part XIII

**Part V Endowment Funds.** Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 10.

	(a) Current year	(b) Prior year	(c) Two years back	(d) Three years back	(e) Four years back
1a Beginning of year balance	44,169.	41,008.	6,182.	5,796.	4,428.
b Contributions	45,947.		36,618.		
c Net investment earnings, gains, and losses	9,746.	7,292.	-1,792.	386.	1,368.
d Grants or scholarships					
e Other expenditures for facilities and programs					
f Administrative expenses	173.	4,131.			
g End of year balance	99,689.	44,169.	41,008.	6,182.	5,796.

2 Provide the estimated percentage of the current year end balance (line 1g, column (a)) held as:

- a Board designated or quasi-endowment  \_\_\_\_\_ %
- b Permanent endowment  86.53 %
- c Temporarily restricted endowment  13.47 %

The percentages on lines 2a, 2b, and 2c should equal 100%.

3a Are there endowment funds not in the possession of the organization that are held and administered for the organization by:

- (i) unrelated organizations
- (ii) related organizations

	Yes	No
3a(i)		X
3a(ii)		X
3b		

b If "Yes" on line 3a(ii), are the related organizations listed as required on Schedule R?

4 Describe in Part XIII the intended uses of the organization's endowment funds.

**Part VI Land, Buildings, and Equipment.**

Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 11a. See Form 990, Part X, line 10.

Description of property	(a) Cost or other basis (investment)	(b) Cost or other basis (other)	(c) Accumulated depreciation	(d) Book value
1a Land		3,943,371.		3,943,371.
b Buildings				
c Leasehold improvements				
d Equipment		43,820.	37,585.	6,235.
e Other				

**Total.** Add lines 1a through 1e. (Column (d) must equal Form 990, Part X, column (B), line 10c.)  3,949,606.

**Part VII Investments - Other Securities.**

Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 11b. See Form 990, Part X, line 12.

(a) Description of security or category (including name of security)	(b) Book value	(c) Method of valuation: Cost or end-of-year market value
(1) Financial derivatives		
(2) Closely-held equity interests		
(3) Other		
(A) ENDOWMENT FUND	99,689.	END-OF-YEAR MARKET VALUE
(B) GIFT ANNUITY	32,389.	END-OF-YEAR MARKET VALUE
(C) STEWARDSHIP & LEGAL		
(D) DEFENSE FUND	407,042.	END-OF-YEAR MARKET VALUE
(E) RESERVE FUND	205,549.	END-OF-YEAR MARKET VALUE
(F) FOREST LEGACY MONITORING		
(G) FUND	82,014.	END-OF-YEAR MARKET VALUE
(H)		
<b>Total.</b> (Col. (b) must equal Form 990, Part X, col. (B) line 12.)	826,683.	

**Part VIII Investments - Program Related.**

Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 11c. See Form 990, Part X, line 13.

(a) Description of investment	(b) Book value	(c) Method of valuation: Cost or end-of-year market value
(1)		
(2)		
(3)		
(4)		
(5)		
(6)		
(7)		
(8)		
(9)		
<b>Total.</b> (Col. (b) must equal Form 990, Part X, col. (B) line 13.)		

**Part IX Other Assets.**

Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 11d. See Form 990, Part X, line 15.

(a) Description	(b) Book value
(1)	
(2)	
(3)	
(4)	
(5)	
(6)	
(7)	
(8)	
(9)	
<b>Total.</b> (Column (b) must equal Form 990, Part X, col. (B) line 15.)	

**Part X Other Liabilities.**

Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 11e or 11f. See Form 990, Part X, line 25.

1. (a) Description of liability	(b) Book value
(1) Federal income taxes	
(2)	
(3)	
(4)	
(5)	
(6)	
(7)	
(8)	
(9)	
<b>Total.</b> (Column (b) must equal Form 990, Part X, col. (B) line 25.)	

2. Liability for uncertain tax positions. In Part XIII, provide the text of the footnote to the organization's financial statements that reports the organization's liability for uncertain tax positions under FIN 48 (ASC 740). Check here if the text of the footnote has been provided in Part XIII



**Part XI Reconciliation of Revenue per Audited Financial Statements With Revenue per Return.**

Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 12a.

<b>1</b>	Total revenue, gains, and other support per audited financial statements	<b>1</b>	2,234,596.
<b>2</b>	Amounts included on line 1 but not on Form 990, Part VIII, line 12:		
<b>a</b>	Net unrealized gains (losses) on investments	<b>2a</b>	98,758.
<b>b</b>	Donated services and use of facilities	<b>2b</b>	111,141.
<b>c</b>	Recoveries of prior year grants	<b>2c</b>	
<b>d</b>	Other (Describe in Part XIII.)	<b>2d</b>	
<b>e</b>	Add lines <b>2a</b> through <b>2d</b>	<b>2e</b>	209,899.
<b>3</b>	Subtract line <b>2e</b> from line <b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	2,024,697.
<b>4</b>	Amounts included on Form 990, Part VIII, line 12, but not on line 1:		
<b>a</b>	Investment expenses not included on Form 990, Part VIII, line 7b	<b>4a</b>	
<b>b</b>	Other (Describe in Part XIII.)	<b>4b</b>	
<b>c</b>	Add lines <b>4a</b> and <b>4b</b>	<b>4c</b>	0.
<b>5</b>	Total revenue. Add lines <b>3</b> and <b>4c</b> . (This must equal Form 990, Part I, line 12.)	<b>5</b>	2,024,697.

**Part XII Reconciliation of Expenses per Audited Financial Statements With Expenses per Return.**

Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 12a.

<b>1</b>	Total expenses and losses per audited financial statements	<b>1</b>	1,181,960.
<b>2</b>	Amounts included on line 1 but not on Form 990, Part IX, line 25:		
<b>a</b>	Donated services and use of facilities	<b>2a</b>	111,141.
<b>b</b>	Prior year adjustments	<b>2b</b>	
<b>c</b>	Other losses	<b>2c</b>	
<b>d</b>	Other (Describe in Part XIII.)	<b>2d</b>	
<b>e</b>	Add lines <b>2a</b> through <b>2d</b>	<b>2e</b>	111,141.
<b>3</b>	Subtract line <b>2e</b> from line <b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	1,070,819.
<b>4</b>	Amounts included on Form 990, Part IX, line 25, but not on line 1:		
<b>a</b>	Investment expenses not included on Form 990, Part VIII, line 7b	<b>4a</b>	
<b>b</b>	Other (Describe in Part XIII.)	<b>4b</b>	
<b>c</b>	Add lines <b>4a</b> and <b>4b</b>	<b>4c</b>	0.
<b>5</b>	Total expenses. Add lines <b>3</b> and <b>4c</b> . (This must equal Form 990, Part I, line 18.)	<b>5</b>	1,070,819.

**Part XIII Supplemental Information.**

Provide the descriptions required for Part II, lines 3, 5, and 9; Part III, lines 1a and 4; Part IV, lines 1b and 2b; Part V, line 4; Part X, line 2; Part XI, lines 2d and 4b; and Part XII, lines 2d and 4b. Also complete this part to provide any additional information.

**PART II, LINE 9:**

THE ORGANIZATION REPORTS THE DONATED VALUE OF CONSERVATION EASEMENTS IN REVENUE IN THE STATEMENT OF ACTIVITY. THE DONATED VALUE OF THE EASEMENT LESS \$1, THE AMOUNT RECORDED IN THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION FOR EACH CONSERVATION EASEMENT, IS RECORDED IN THE STATEMENT OF ACTIVITY AS A PROGRAM EXPENSE. THE COST OF THE CONSERVATION EASEMENT TO THE ORGANIZATION IS RECORDED IN THE STATEMENT OF ACTIVITY AS A PROGRAM EXPENSE.

**PART X, LINE 2:**

VITAL GROUND IS A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION AND IS EXEMPT FROM FEDERAL AND STATE INCOME TAXES UNDER SECTION 501(C)(3) OF THE INTERNAL REVENUE CODE.

**Part XIII** Supplemental Information *(continued)*

VITAL GROUND APPLIES GENERALLY ACCEPTED ACCOUNTING PRINCIPLES FOR RECOGNITION OF UNCERTAINTY IN INCOME TAXES AND PRESCRIBING A RECOGNITION THRESHOLD AND MEASUREMENT ATTRIBUTE FOR THE RECOGNITION AND MEASUREMENT OF A TAX POSITION TAKEN OR EXPECTED TO BE TAKEN IN A TAX RETURN. IN THE COURSE OF ITS ASSESSMENT, VITAL GROUND HAS DETERMINED THAT IT IS SUBJECT TO EXAMINATION FOR INCOME TAX FILINGS IN THE UNITED STATES FOR THE PRIOR THREE TAX YEARS. IN THE EVENT THAT THE ORGANIZATION IS ASSESSED PENALTIES AND OR INTEREST, PENALTIES WILL BE CHARGED TO PENALTIES EXPENSE AND INTEREST WILL BE CHARGED TO INTEREST EXPENSE.

**SCHEDULE G**  
**(Form 990 or 990-EZ)**

Department of the Treasury  
Internal Revenue Service

**Supplemental Information Regarding Fundraising or Gaming Activities**  
Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 17, 18, or 19, or if the organization entered more than \$15,000 on Form 990-EZ, line 6a.  
▶ Attach to Form 990 or Form 990-EZ.  
▶ Go to [www.irs.gov/Form990](http://www.irs.gov/Form990) for the latest instructions.

OMB No. 1545-0047

**2017**

Open to Public  
Inspection

Name of the organization **THE VITAL GROUND FOUNDATION, INC.** Employer identification number **87-0483446**

**Part I Fundraising Activities.** Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 17. Form 990-EZ filers are not required to complete this part.

**1** Indicate whether the organization raised funds through any of the following activities. Check all that apply.

- a  Mail solicitations
- b  Internet and email solicitations
- c  Phone solicitations
- d  In-person solicitations
- e  Solicitation of non-government grants
- f  Solicitation of government grants
- g  Special fundraising events

**2 a** Did the organization have a written or oral agreement with any individual (including officers, directors, trustees, or key employees listed in Form 990, Part VII) or entity in connection with professional fundraising services?  Yes  No

**b** If "Yes," list the 10 highest paid individuals or entities (fundraisers) pursuant to agreements under which the fundraiser is to be compensated at least \$5,000 by the organization.

(i) Name and address of individual or entity (fundraiser)	(ii) Activity	(iii) Did fundraiser have custody or control of contributions?		(iv) Gross receipts from activity	(v) Amount paid to (or retained by) fundraiser listed in col. (i)	(vi) Amount paid to (or retained by) organization
		Yes	No			
<b>Total</b> .....				▶		

**3** List all states in which the organization is registered or licensed to solicit contributions or has been notified it is exempt from registration or licensing.

**Part II Fundraising Events.** Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 18, or reported more than \$15,000 of fundraising event contributions and gross income on Form 990-EZ, lines 1 and 6b. List events with gross receipts greater than \$5,000.

		(a) Event #1	(b) Event #2	(c) Other events	(d) Total events (add col. (a) through col. (c))
		ECO-TOUR TO KNIGHT INLET (event type)	(event type)	NONE (total number)	
Revenue	1	Gross receipts	162,010.		162,010.
	2	Less: Contributions			
	3	Gross income (line 1 minus line 2)	162,010.		162,010.
Direct Expenses	4	Cash prizes			
	5	Noncash prizes			
	6	Rent/facility costs	13,800.		13,800.
	7	Food and beverages			
	8	Entertainment			
	9	Other direct expenses	96,334.		96,334.
	10	Direct expense summary. Add lines 4 through 9 in column (d)			
11	Net income summary. Subtract line 10 from line 3, column (d)				51,876.

**Part III Gaming.** Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 19, or reported more than \$15,000 on Form 990-EZ, line 6a.

		(a) Bingo	(b) Pull tabs/instant bingo/progressive bingo	(c) Other gaming	(d) Total gaming (add col. (a) through col. (c))
Revenue	1	Gross revenue			
	2	Cash prizes			
Direct Expenses	3	Noncash prizes			
	4	Rent/facility costs			
	5	Other direct expenses			
6	Volunteer labor	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes _____ % <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes _____ % <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes _____ % <input type="checkbox"/> No	
7	Direct expense summary. Add lines 2 through 5 in column (d)				
8	Net gaming income summary. Subtract line 7 from line 1, column (d)				

9 Enter the state(s) in which the organization conducts gaming activities: \_\_\_\_\_  
 a Is the organization licensed to conduct gaming activities in each of these states?  Yes  No  
 b If "No," explain: \_\_\_\_\_

10a Were any of the organization's gaming licenses revoked, suspended, or terminated during the tax year?  Yes  No  
 b If "Yes," explain: \_\_\_\_\_

11 Does the organization conduct gaming activities with nonmembers?  Yes  No  
12 Is the organization a grantor, beneficiary or trustee of a trust, or a member of a partnership or other entity formed to administer charitable gaming?  Yes  No

13 Indicate the percentage of gaming activity conducted in:  
a The organization's facility 

<b>13a</b>		%
<b>13b</b>		%

  
b An outside facility

14 Enter the name and address of the person who prepares the organization's gaming/special events books and records:  
Name ▶ \_\_\_\_\_  
Address ▶ \_\_\_\_\_

15a Does the organization have a contract with a third party from whom the organization receives gaming revenue?  Yes  No  
b If "Yes," enter the amount of gaming revenue received by the organization ▶ \$ \_\_\_\_\_ and the amount of gaming revenue retained by the third party ▶ \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
c If "Yes," enter name and address of the third party:

Name ▶ \_\_\_\_\_  
Address ▶ \_\_\_\_\_

16 Gaming manager information:

Name ▶ \_\_\_\_\_  
Gaming manager compensation ▶ \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Description of services provided ▶ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Director/officer     Employee     Independent contractor

17 Mandatory distributions:

a Is the organization required under state law to make charitable distributions from the gaming proceeds to retain the state gaming license?  Yes  No  
b Enter the amount of distributions required under state law to be distributed to other exempt organizations or spent in the organization's own exempt activities during the tax year ▶ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Part IV** **Supplemental Information.** Provide the explanations required by Part I, line 2b, columns (iii) and (v); and Part III, lines 9, 9b, 10b, 15b, 15c, 16, and 17b, as applicable. Also provide any additional information. See instructions.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Part IV** Supplemental Information *(continued)*

Multiple horizontal lines for supplemental information.

**SCHEDULE I  
(Form 990)**

Department of the Treasury  
Internal Revenue Service

**Grants and Other Assistance to Organizations,  
Governments, and Individuals in the United States**  
Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 21 or 22.

▶ **Attach to Form 990.**

▶ **Go to [www.irs.gov/Form990](http://www.irs.gov/Form990) for the latest information.**

OMB No. 1545-0047

**2017**

**Open to Public  
Inspection**

Name of the organization **THE VITAL GROUND FOUNDATION, INC.** Employer identification number **87-0483446**

**Part I General Information on Grants and Assistance**

- 1** Does the organization maintain records to substantiate the amount of the grants or assistance, the grantees' eligibility for the grants or assistance, and the selection criteria used to award the grants or assistance? .....  **Yes**  **No**
- 2** Describe in Part IV the organization's procedures for monitoring the use of grant funds in the United States.

**Part II Grants and Other Assistance to Domestic Organizations and Domestic Governments.** Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 21, for any recipient that received more than \$5,000. Part II can be duplicated if additional space is needed.

<b>1 (a)</b> Name and address of organization or government	<b>(b)</b> EIN	<b>(c)</b> IRC section (if applicable)	<b>(d)</b> Amount of cash grant	<b>(e)</b> Amount of non-cash assistance	<b>(f)</b> Method of valuation (book, FMV, appraisal, other)	<b>(g)</b> Description of noncash assistance	<b>(h)</b> Purpose of grant or assistance
UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE 26 FORT MISSOULA ROAD MISSOULA, MT 59804	72-0564834	GOVERNMENT ENTITY	0.	30,500.	HISTORICAL COST	40 ACRES FOR THE LOLO NATIONAL FOREST	TO PERMANENTLY PROTECT ITS WILDLIFE HABITAT AND SCENIC VALUES AND ELIMINATE THE POTENTIAL
THE MONTANA LAND RELIANCE PO BOX 355 HELENA, MT 59624	81-0369262	501(C)(3)	6,500.	0.			TO ASSIST WITH THE ACQUISITION OF A CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROTECTING AN 836-ACRE
BIG HOLE WATERSHED COMMITTEE PO BOX 21 DIVIDE, MT 59727	11-3737644	501(C)(3)	5,000.	0.			TO EMPLOY A PROGRAM PREVENTING CONFLICTS BETWEEN LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS AND GRIZZLY
SWAN VALLEY CONNECTIONS 6887 MT HIGHWAY 83 CONDON, MT 59826	81-0512368	501(C)(3)	5,000.	0.			TO CONTINUE A BEAR-RESISTANT GARBAGE CONTAINER LOANER PROGRAM AND ERECT BEAR-PROOF
CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES - PO BOX 278 - PABLO, MT 59855	81-0230409	GOVERNMENT ENTITY	5,000.	0.			TO STUDY AND PREVENT CONFLICTS BETWEEN SMALL LIVESTOCK (CHICKENS, DUCKS, GOATS, ETC.) AND

**2** Enter total number of section 501(c)(3) and government organizations listed in the line 1 table ..... **3.**

**3** Enter total number of other organizations listed in the line 1 table ..... **2.**

LHA For Paperwork Reduction Act Notice, see the Instructions for Form 990.

**SEE PART IV FOR COLUMN (H) DESCRIPTIONS**

Schedule I (Form 990) (2017)

**Part III** **Grants and Other Assistance to Domestic Individuals.** Complete if the organization answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, line 22.  
Part III can be duplicated if additional space is needed.

(a) Type of grant or assistance	(b) Number of recipients	(c) Amount of cash grant	(d) Amount of non-cash assistance	(e) Method of valuation (book, FMV, appraisal, other)	(f) Description of noncash assistance

**Part IV** **Supplemental Information.** Provide the information required in Part I, line 2; Part III, column (b); and any other additional information.

PART I, LINE 2:

VITAL GROUND REQUIRES A DETAILED PROJECT PROPOSAL AND BUDGET FROM PROSPECTIVE GRANTEEES PRIOR TO APPROVING AND AWARDDING GRANTS. THE USE OF GRANT FUNDS IS MONITORED BY REQUIRING WRITTEN PROJECT PROGRESS/COMPLETION REPORTS FROM ALL GRANTEEES.

PART II, LINE 1, COLUMN (H):

NAME OF ORGANIZATION OR GOVERNMENT: UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE

(H) PURPOSE OF GRANT OR ASSISTANCE: TO PERMANENTLY PROTECT ITS WILDLIFE



**Part IV** Supplemental Information

HABITAT AND SCENIC VALUES AND ELIMINATE THE POTENTIAL FOR PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT.

NAME OF ORGANIZATION OR GOVERNMENT: THE MONTANA LAND RELIANCE

(H) PURPOSE OF GRANT OR ASSISTANCE: TO ASSIST WITH THE ACQUISITION OF A CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROTECTING AN 836-ACRE WORKING RANCH THAT PROVIDES WILDLIFE HABITAT ALONG THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN FRONT IN MONTANA.

NAME OF ORGANIZATION OR GOVERNMENT: BIG HOLE WATERSHED COMMITTEE

(H) PURPOSE OF GRANT OR ASSISTANCE: TO EMPLOY A PROGRAM PREVENTING CONFLICTS BETWEEN LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS AND GRIZZLY BEARS.

NAME OF ORGANIZATION OR GOVERNMENT: SWAN VALLEY CONNECTIONS

(H) PURPOSE OF GRANT OR ASSISTANCE: TO CONTINUE A BEAR-RESISTANT GARBAGE CONTAINER LOANER PROGRAM AND ERECT BEAR-PROOF FENCES.

NAME OF ORGANIZATION OR GOVERNMENT:

CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES

(H) PURPOSE OF GRANT OR ASSISTANCE: TO STUDY AND PREVENT CONFLICTS BETWEEN SMALL LIVESTOCK (CHICKENS, DUCKS, GOATS, ETC.) AND GRIZZLY BEARS IN MONTANA'S MISSION VALLEY.

**SCHEDULE M  
(Form 990)**

**Noncash Contributions**

OMB No. 1545-0047

**2017**

Open To Public Inspection

Department of the Treasury  
Internal Revenue Service

- ▶ Complete if the organizations answered "Yes" on Form 990, Part IV, lines 29 or 30.
- ▶ Attach to Form 990.
- ▶ Go to [www.irs.gov/Form990](http://www.irs.gov/Form990) for the latest information.

Name of the organization **THE VITAL GROUND FOUNDATION, INC.** Employer identification number **87-0483446**

**Part I Types of Property**

	(a) Check if applicable	(b) Number of contributions or items contributed	(c) Noncash contribution amounts reported on Form 990, Part VIII, line 1g	(d) Method of determining noncash contribution amounts
1 Art - Works of art				
2 Art - Historical treasures				
3 Art - Fractional interests				
4 Books and publications				
5 Clothing and household goods				
6 Cars and other vehicles				
7 Boats and planes				
8 Intellectual property				
9 Securities - Publicly traded				
10 Securities - Closely held stock				
11 Securities - Partnership, LLC, or trust interests				
12 Securities - Miscellaneous				
13 Qualified conservation contribution - Historic structures				
14 Qualified conservation contribution - Other	X	1	200,000.	EST. FAIR MARKET VAL
15 Real estate - Residential				
16 Real estate - Commercial				
17 Real estate - Other				
18 Collectibles				
19 Food inventory				
20 Drugs and medical supplies				
21 Taxidermy				
22 Historical artifacts				
23 Scientific specimens				
24 Archeological artifacts				
25 Other (GOODS AND EQU)	X	9	23,354.	EST. COST FROM DONOR
26 Other ( )				
27 Other ( )				
28 Other ( )				

29 Number of Forms 8283 received by the organization during the tax year for contributions for which the organization completed Form 8283, Part IV, Donee Acknowledgement **29**

- 30a During the year, did the organization receive by contribution any property reported in Part I, lines 1 through 28, that it must hold for at least three years from the date of the initial contribution, and which isn't required to be used for exempt purposes for the entire holding period? **X**
- b If "Yes," describe the arrangement in Part II.
- 31 Does the organization have a gift acceptance policy that requires the review of any nonstandard contributions? **X**
- 32a Does the organization hire or use third parties or related organizations to solicit, process, or sell noncash contributions? **X**
- b If "Yes," describe in Part II.
- 33 If the organization didn't report an amount in column (c) for a type of property for which column (a) is checked, describe in Part II.

	Yes	No
30a		X
31	X	
32a		X

LHA For Paperwork Reduction Act Notice, see the Instructions for Form 990.

Schedule M (Form 990) 2017

**Part II** **Supplemental Information.** Provide the information required by Part I, lines 30b, 32b, and 33, and whether the organization is reporting in Part I, column (b), the number of contributions, the number of items received, or a combination of both. Also complete this part for any additional information.

SCHEDULE M, PART I, COLUMN (B):

THE ORGANIZATION IS REPORTING THE NUMBER OF ITEMS CONTRIBUTED.

**SCHEDULE O**  
**(Form 990 or 990-EZ)**

Department of the Treasury  
Internal Revenue Service

**Supplemental Information to Form 990 or 990-EZ**

Complete to provide information for responses to specific questions on  
Form 990 or 990-EZ or to provide any additional information.

▶ Attach to Form 990 or 990-EZ.

▶ Go to [www.irs.gov/Form990](http://www.irs.gov/Form990) for the latest information.

OMB No. 1545-0047

**2017**

Open to Public  
Inspection

Name of the organization

THE VITAL GROUND FOUNDATION, INC.

Employer identification number

87-0483446

FORM 990, PART III, LINE 4A, PROGRAM SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

IN ADDITION TO DEVELOPING AND MANAGING ITS OWN PROJECTS, VITAL GROUND OCCASIONALLY PROVIDES GRANTS TO AGENCIES, GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES AND OTHER NONPROFIT CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS TO ASSIST WITH THEIR EFFORTS TO CONSERVE AND RESTORE IMPORTANT WILDLIFE HABITAT, OR TO PREVENT CONFLICTS BETWEEN BEARS AND PEOPLE.

2017 ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDE:

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS:

ACQUIRED ONE CONSERVATION EASEMENT TOTALING 142.07 ACRES IN THE MIDDLE FORK OF THE FLATHEAD RIVER VALLEY TO PERMANENTLY PROTECT ITS WILDLIFE HABITAT AND SCENIC VALUES AND ELIMINATE THE POTENTIAL FOR PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT ALONG THE BOUNDARY OF THE FLATHEAD NATIONAL FOREST IN MONTANA.

MONITORED FIFTEEN CONSERVATION EASEMENTS HELD BY VITAL GROUND IN MONTANA, TWO CONSERVATION EASEMENTS HELD BY VITAL GROUND IN IDAHO, AND FOUR FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM CONSERVATION EASEMENTS HELD BY THE IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF LANDS IN IDAHO (ALL ACQUIRED PRIOR TO 2017).

CONTINUED WORKING TO ADVANCE THE SWAN VALLEY GRIZZLY BEAR CONSERVATION INITIATIVE - AN EFFORT TO CONSERVE KEY GRIZZLY BEAR HABITAT AND LINKAGES BETWEEN THE BOB MARSHALL WILDERNESS AND MISSION MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS AREAS IN MISSOULA AND LAKE COUNTIES MONTANA.

Name of the organization

THE VITAL GROUND FOUNDATION, INC.

Employer identification number

87-0483446

LAND ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT:

ACQUIRED SEVEN PROPERTIES TOTALING 25 ACRES IN FEE-TITLE TO PROTECT THEIR WILDLIFE HABITAT AND SCENIC VALUES AS PART OF THE ORGANIZATION'S CONTINUING WORK TO ADVANCE THE SELKIRK-PURCELL-CABINET LINKAGE INITIATIVE IN NORTHWESTERN MONTANA AND NORTH IDAHO - AN EFFORT TO PERMANENTLY CONSERVE KEY GRIZZLY BEAR HABITAT LINKAGES BETWEEN SELKIRK, PURCELL AND CABINET-YAAK ECOSYSTEMS.

DONATED A KEY, 40-ACRE PROPERTY TO THE LOLO NATIONAL FOREST TO PERMANENTLY PROTECT ITS WILDLIFE HABITAT AND SCENIC VALUES AND ELIMINATE THE POTENTIAL FOR PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT AT THE EDGE OF THE CUBE IRON - MOUNT SILCOX INVENTORIED ROADLESS AREA (DECEMBER 2017).

PROVIDED A \$6,500 GRANT TO THE MONTANA LAND RELIANCE TO ASSIST WITH THE ACQUISITION OF A CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROTECTING AN 836-ACRE WORKING RANCH THAT PROVIDES WILDLIFE HABITAT ALONG THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN FRONT IN MONTANA.

CONTINUED PROMOTING THE GOALS OF THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE'S COMMUNITY FOREST AND OPEN SPACE PROGRAM THROUGH FOREST STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PUBLIC STAKEHOLDERS' COMMITTEE GUIDING MANAGEMENT OF VITAL GROUND'S ALVORD LAKE COMMUNITY FOREST.

MONITORED SEVEN FEE-TITLE CONSERVATION PROPERTIES IN IDAHO AND THREE FEE-TITLE CONSERVATION PROPERTIES IN MONTANA (ALL ACQUIRED PRIOR TO 2017).

Name of the organization

THE VITAL GROUND FOUNDATION, INC.

Employer identification number

87-0483446

CONDUCTED HABITAT ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITIES ON PROPERTIES HELD FOR THE  
BENEFIT OF WILDLIFE IN BONNER AND BOUNDARY COUNTIES, IDAHO AND IN  
LINCOLN AND MISSOULA COUNTIES, MONTANA.

FORM 990, PART III, LINE 4B, PROGRAM SERVICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

PRODUCED 10,000 COPIES OF VITAL NEWS, THE ORGANIZATION'S BIENNIAL  
16-PAGE NEWSLETTER WHICH REPORTS ON GRIZZLY BEAR AND WILDLIFE HABITAT  
CONSERVATION ISSUES, PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES, AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

PRODUCED TEN ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTERS THAT WERE DISTRIBUTED TO  
APPROXIMATELY 3,400 UNIQUE RECIPIENTS (44,000 TOTAL COMMUNICATIONS).  
THESE ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTERS REPORTED ON GRIZZLY BEAR AND WILDLIFE  
HABITAT CONSERVATION ISSUES, EMERGING PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES,  
CONSERVATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND FUNDING NEEDS.

PRODUCED OTHER ASSORTED POSTCARDS AND PROMOTIONS THAT REPORTED ON  
GRIZZLY BEAR AND WILDLIFE HABITAT CONSERVATION ISSUES, EMERGING PROJECT  
OPPORTUNITIES, CONSERVATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND FUNDING NEEDS.

MAINTAINED A WEBSITE (WWW.VITALGROUND.ORG) PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE  
INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC ABOUT GRIZZLY BEARS, WILDLIFE HABITAT  
CONSERVATION ISSUES, CURRENT GRIZZLY BEAR CONSERVATION CHALLENGES AND  
PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS. DURING 2017, THE WEBSITE RECEIVED 174,000  
PAGE VIEWS BY 82,000 UNIQUE VISITORS.

PROMOTED WILDLIFE HABITAT, GRIZZLY BEAR NATURAL HISTORY AND  
CONSERVATION EDUCATION TOPICS TO A SOCIAL MEDIA AUDIENCE OF 23,000.

Name of the organization

THE VITAL GROUND FOUNDATION, INC.

Employer identification number

87-0483446

CONTINUED WORKING TO ADVANCE VITAL GROUND'S GRIZZLY BEAR CONSERVATION  
EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CHICAGO ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY AT THE  
BROOKFIELD ZOO'S GREAT BEAR WILDERNESS EXHIBIT.

CONSERVATION EDUCATION GRANTS AWARDED (\$1,000)

VITAL GROUND PROVIDED A \$1,000 GRANT TO PEOPLE AND CARNIVORES TO  
ADDRESS WILDLIFE CONFLICTS STEMMING FROM UNSECURED ATTRACTANTS IN THE  
MADISON VALLEY.

OTHER:

IN ADDITION TO ITS LAND CONSERVATION AND CONSERVATION EDUCATION  
PROGRAMS, VITAL GROUND ALSO PARTICIPATES IN RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT  
PROJECTS DESIGNED TO PROMOTE THE CONSERVATION OF GRIZZLY BEARS AND  
THEIR HABITAT, PREVENT CONFLICTS BETWEEN BEARS AND HUMANS, AND/OR  
ENHANCE THE SURVIVAL OF GRIZZLY BEARS.

2017 ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDE:

VITAL GROUND PROVIDED A \$5,000 GRANT TO THE BIG HOLE WATERSHED  
COMMITTEE TO EMPLOY A RANGE RIDER PROGRAM PREVENTING CONFLICTS BETWEEN  
LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS AND GRIZZLY BEARS ON GRAZING ALLOTMENTS IN THE BIG  
HOLE VALLEY, MONTANA.

VITAL GROUND PROVIDED A \$5,000 "COMMUNITY BEAR AWARE" GRANT TO THE SWAN  
ECOSYSTEM CENTER TO SUPPORT ITS SWAN VALLEY BEAR RESOURCES PROGRAM.

VITAL GROUND'S CONTRIBUTION WAS USED TO CONTINUE A BEAR-RESISTANT

Name of the organization THE VITAL GROUND FOUNDATION, INC.	Employer identification number 87-0483446
---	--

GARBAGE CONTAINER LOANER PROGRAM, ASSIST LANDOWNERS WITH SMALL LIVESTOCK TO ERECT BEAR-PROOF ELECTRIC FENCES, AND ALLOW SVBR'S TRAINED STAFF TO ENGAGE THE PUBLIC AND SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT BEARS AND BEAR SAFETY IN MISSOULA AND LAKE COUNTIES, MONTANA.

VITAL GROUND PROVIDED A \$5,000 GRANT TO THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES TO STUDY AND PREVENT CONFLICTS BETWEEN SMALL LIVESTOCK (CHICKENS, DUCKS, GOATS, ETC.) AND GRIZZLY BEARS IN MONTANA'S MISSION VALLEY.

FORM 990, PART VI, SECTION B, LINE 11B:

THE 990 IS PREPARED BY THE ORGANIZATION'S ACCOUNTING FIRM, REVIEWED BY THE ORGANIZATION'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PROVIDED TO THE ORGANIZATION'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR REVIEW AND COMMENT, AND THEN APPROVED BY THE ORGANIZATION'S AUDIT COMMITTEE (A COMMITTEE OF THE ORGANIZATION'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES).

FORM 990, PART VI, SECTION B, LINE 12C:

THE "CONFLICTS OF INTEREST" POLICY IS REVIEWED AND SIGNED ANNUALLY BY ALL TRUSTEES AND EMPLOYEES.

FORM 990, PART VI, SECTION B, LINE 15:

THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COMPENSATION IS REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES. THE TOTAL EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION BUDGET IS REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AS PART OF THE ANNUAL BUDGET REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS. EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION (OTHER THAN THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR) IS NOT INDIVIDUALLY REVIEWED BY THE BOARD, BUT BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR. PUBLISHED SALARY SURVEYS (LAND TRUST ALLIANCE AND TRAINING RESOURCES FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL



Name of the organization <b>THE VITAL GROUND FOUNDATION, INC.</b>	Employer identification number <b>87-0483446</b>
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COMMUNITY) ARE USED TO PROVIDE COMPARATIVE COMPENSATION GUIDELINES.

FORM 990, PART VI, LINE 17, LIST OF STATES RECEIVING COPY OF FORM 990:

AL, AK, AR, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, HI, IL, KS, KY, MD, MA, MI, MN, MS, MO, NH, NJ, NM, NY, NC, OH, OK  
OR, PA, RI, SC, TN, UT, VA, WV, WI, ME, ND, WA

FORM 990, PART VI, SECTION C, LINE 19:

AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND FORM 990 ARE POSTED ON THE ORGANIZATION'S  
WEBSITE. OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL DOCUMENTS (FORM 1023, IRS LETTER OF  
DETERMINATION, ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION, BYLAWS, CONFLICTS OF INTEREST  
POLICY, AND OTHER GOVERNING POLICIES) ARE PROVIDED UPON REQUEST.

FORM 990, PART XII, LINE 2C

THIS PROCESS HAS NOT CHANGED FROM THE PRIOR YEAR.

Department of the Treasury  
Internal Revenue Service (99)

▶ **Go to www.irs.gov/Form4562 for instructions and the latest information.**

▶ **Attach to your tax return.**

Name(s) shown on return

Business or activity to which this form relates

Identifying number

**THE VITAL GROUND FOUNDATION, INC.**

**FORM 990 PAGE 10**

**87-0483446**

**Part I Election To Expense Certain Property Under Section 179** Note: If you have any listed property, complete Part V before you complete Part I.

1	Maximum amount (see instructions)	1	510,000.
2	Total cost of section 179 property placed in service (see instructions)	2	
3	Threshold cost of section 179 property before reduction in limitation	3	2,030,000.
4	Reduction in limitation. Subtract line 3 from line 2. If zero or less, enter -0-	4	
5	Dollar limitation for tax year. Subtract line 4 from line 1. If zero or less, enter -0-. If married filing separately, see instructions	5	
6	(a) Description of property	(b) Cost (business use only)	(c) Elected cost
7	Listed property. Enter the amount from line 29	7	
8	Total elected cost of section 179 property. Add amounts in column (c), lines 6 and 7	8	
9	Tentative deduction. Enter the smaller of line 5 or line 8	9	
10	Carryover of disallowed deduction from line 13 of your 2016 Form 4562	10	
11	Business income limitation. Enter the smaller of business income (not less than zero) or line 5	11	
12	Section 179 expense deduction. Add lines 9 and 10, but don't enter more than line 11	12	
13	Carryover of disallowed deduction to 2018. Add lines 9 and 10, less line 12	13	

Note: Don't use Part II or Part III below for listed property. Instead, use Part V.

**Part II Special Depreciation Allowance and Other Depreciation (Don't include listed property.)**

14	Special depreciation allowance for qualified property (other than listed property) placed in service during the tax year	14	
15	Property subject to section 168(f)(1) election	15	
16	Other depreciation (including ACRS)	16	3,741.

**Part III MACRS Depreciation (Don't include listed property.) (See instructions.)**

**Section A**

17	MACRS deductions for assets placed in service in tax years beginning before 2017	17	
18	If you are electing to group any assets placed in service during the tax year into one or more general asset accounts, check here		<input type="checkbox"/>

**Section B - Assets Placed in Service During 2017 Tax Year Using the General Depreciation System**

(a) Classification of property	(b) Month and year placed in service	(c) Basis for depreciation (business/investment use only - see instructions)	(d) Recovery period	(e) Convention	(f) Method	(g) Depreciation deduction
19a	3-year property					
b	5-year property					
c	7-year property					
d	10-year property					
e	15-year property					
f	20-year property					
g	25-year property		25 yrs.		S/L	
h	Residential rental property	/	27.5 yrs.	MM	S/L	
		/	27.5 yrs.	MM	S/L	
i	Nonresidential real property	/	39 yrs.	MM	S/L	
		/		MM	S/L	

**Section C - Assets Placed in Service During 2017 Tax Year Using the Alternative Depreciation System**

20a	Class life				S/L	
b	12-year		12 yrs.		S/L	
c	40-year	/	40 yrs.	MM	S/L	

**Part IV Summary (See instructions.)**

21	Listed property. Enter amount from line 28	21	
22	Total. Add amounts from line 12, lines 14 through 17, lines 19 and 20 in column (g), and line 21. Enter here and on the appropriate lines of your return. Partnerships and S corporations - see instr.	22	3,741.
23	For assets shown above and placed in service during the current year, enter the portion of the basis attributable to section 263A costs	23	

Part V Listed Property (Include automobiles, certain other vehicles, certain aircraft, certain computers, and property used for entertainment, recreation, or amusement.)

Note: For any vehicle for which you are using the standard mileage rate or deducting lease expense, complete only 24a, 24b, columns (a) through (c) of Section A, all of Section B, and Section C if applicable.

Section A - Depreciation and Other Information (Caution: See the instructions for limits for passenger automobiles.)

24a Do you have evidence to support the business/investment use claimed? Yes No 24b If "Yes," is the evidence written? Yes No

Table with 9 columns: (a) Type of property, (b) Date placed in service, (c) Business/investment use percentage, (d) Cost or other basis, (e) Basis for depreciation, (f) Recovery period, (g) Method/Convention, (h) Depreciation deduction, (i) Elected section 179 cost.

25 Special depreciation allowance for qualified listed property placed in service during the tax year and used more than 50% in a qualified business use 25

26 Property used more than 50% in a qualified business use: Table with 9 columns for property details and percentages.

27 Property used 50% or less in a qualified business use: Table with 9 columns for property details and percentages.

28 Add amounts in column (h), lines 25 through 27. Enter here and on line 21, page 1 28

29 Add amounts in column (i), line 26. Enter here and on line 7, page 1 29

Section B - Information on Use of Vehicles

Complete this section for vehicles used by a sole proprietor, partner, or other "more than 5% owner," or related person. If you provided vehicles to your employees, first answer the questions in Section C to see if you meet an exception to completing this section for those vehicles.

Table for Section B with 6 main columns: (a) Vehicle, (b) Vehicle, (c) Vehicle, (d) Vehicle, (e) Vehicle, (f) Vehicle. Rows 30-36 cover miles driven and personal use availability.

Section C - Questions for Employers Who Provide Vehicles for Use by Their Employees

Answer these questions to determine if you meet an exception to completing Section B for vehicles used by employees who aren't more than 5% owners or related persons.

Table for Section C with 2 columns: Yes, No. Rows 37-41 cover policy statements and requirements for vehicle use.

Note: If your answer to 37, 38, 39, 40, or 41 is "Yes," don't complete Section B for the covered vehicles.

Part VI Amortization

Table with 6 columns: (a) Description of costs, (b) Date amortization begins, (c) Amortizable amount, (d) Code section, (e) Amortization period or percentage, (f) Amortization for this year.

24 Amortization of costs that begins during your 2017 tax year: Table with 6 columns for cost details.

43 Amortization of costs that began before your 2017 tax year 43 533.

44 Total. Add amounts in column (f). See the instructions for where to report 44 533.

# Application for Automatic Extension of Time To File an Exempt Organization Return

Department of the Treasury  
Internal Revenue Service

▶ **File a separate application for each return.**

▶ **Information about Form 8868 and its instructions is at [www.irs.gov/form8868](http://www.irs.gov/form8868) .**

**Electronic filing (e-file).** You can electronically file Form 8868 to request a 6-month automatic extension of time to file any of the forms listed below with the exception of Form 8870, Information Return for Transfers Associated With Certain Personal Benefit Contracts, for which an extension request must be sent to the IRS in paper format (see instructions). For more details on the electronic filing of this form, visit [www.irs.gov/efile](http://www.irs.gov/efile), click on Charities & Non-Profits, and click on e-file for Charities and Non-Profits.

**Automatic 6-Month Extension of Time.** Only submit original (no copies needed).

All corporations required to file an income tax return other than Form 990-T (including 1120-C filers), partnerships, REMICs, and trusts must use Form 7004 to request an extension of time to file income tax returns.

		Enter filer's identifying number
<b>Type or print</b>  File by the due date for filing your return. See instructions.	Name of exempt organization or other filer, see instructions.  <b>THE VITAL GROUND FOUNDATION, INC.</b>	Employer identification number (EIN) or  <b>87-0483446</b>
	Number, street, and room or suite no. If a P.O. box, see instructions. <b>20 FORT MISSOULA ROAD</b>	Social security number (SSN)
	City, town or post office, state, and ZIP code. For a foreign address, see instructions. <b>MISSOULA, MT 59804-7202</b>	

Enter the Return Code for the return that this application is for (file a separate application for each return) 0 1

Application Is For	Return Code	Application Is For	Return Code
Form 990 or Form 990-EZ	01	Form 990-T (corporation)	07
Form 990-BL	02	Form 1041-A	08
Form 4720 (individual)	03	Form 4720 (other than individual)	09
Form 990-PF	04	Form 5227	10
Form 990-T (sec. 401(a) or 408(a) trust)	05	Form 6069	11
Form 990-T (trust other than above)	06	Form 8870	12

**RYAN LUTEY**

• The books are in the care of ▶ **20 FORT MISSOULA ROAD - MISSOULA, MT 59804-7202**  
 Telephone No. ▶ **406-549-8650** Fax No. ▶ \_\_\_\_\_

- If the organization does not have an office or place of business in the United States, check this box
- If this is for a Group Return, enter the organization's four digit Group Exemption Number (GEN) \_\_\_\_\_. If this is for the whole group, check this box . If it is for part of the group, check this box  and attach a list with the names and EINs of all members the extension is for.

**1** I request an automatic 6-month extension of time until **NOVEMBER 15, 2018**, to file the exempt organization return for the organization named above. The extension is for the organization's return for:

- ▶  calendar year **2017** or
- ▶  tax year beginning \_\_\_\_\_, and ending \_\_\_\_\_.

**2** If the tax year entered in line 1 is for less than 12 months, check reason:  Initial return  Final return  Change in accounting period

<b>3a</b> If this application is for Forms 990-BL, 990-PF, 990-T, 4720, or 6069, enter the tentative tax, less any nonrefundable credits. See instructions.	<b>3a</b>	\$	0.
<b>b</b> If this application is for Forms 990-PF, 990-T, 4720, or 6069, enter any refundable credits and estimated tax payments made. Include any prior year overpayment allowed as a credit.	<b>3b</b>	\$	0.
<b>c Balance due.</b> Subtract line 3b from line 3a. Include your payment with this form, if required, by using EFTPS (Electronic Federal Tax Payment System). See instructions.	<b>3c</b>	\$	0.

**Caution:** If you are going to make an electronic funds withdrawal (direct debit) with this Form 8868, see Form 8453-EO and Form 8879-EO for payment instructions.

**MAIL TO: DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY  
INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE CENTER  
OGDEN, UT 84201-0045**