THE VITAL GROUND FOUNDATION | FALL 2020

VITAL NEWS

Thomas D. Mangelsen

ONE LANDSCAPE FOR WILDLIFE AND PEOPLE • 30TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL ISSUE

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF WORKING FOR WILDLIFE!

Much was different when Doug and Lynne Seus established The Vital Ground Foundation in 1990. Earth's human population was smaller—by about 2.5 billion people—and the concept of a greenhouse effect warming the climate was just entering public discourse. Another population was smaller, too: there were close to 1,000 fewer grizzly bears in the Northern Rockies. It's no coincidence that as Vital Ground has grown, so have the grizzly's chances at durable recovery in the Lower 48.

For all the progress made by so many in the conservation world, the Great Bear's range remains functionally fragmented and other species like wolverine and Canada lynx share their plight. Hard work lies ahead if we're to protect the key habitat corridors wildlife need for a resilient future. But with a sound strategy and supporters like you behind us, we're forging into our next 30 years full of gratitude and energy. **Thank you!**

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VITAL GROUND FOUNDATION 30th Anniversary 1990-2020

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S CORNER

An Exciting Anniversary, and the Visionaries Behind It

With winter arriving as fast as my deadline reminders from the *Vital News* editor, I'm writing to you 10 days before Vital Ground's official 30th anniversary. Doug and Lynne Seus brought the foundation into legal existence by executing its articles of incorporation on November 7, 1990, and while I don't intend to suggest that the organization operated in some off-the-books rogue state prior to that date, it provides a convenient starting point to document the launch of our mission to protect habitat for the grizzly bear and all things wild.

While the legally-trained side of my brain will always home in on the genesis date of November 7, my 15 years with Vital Ground have taught me that a vibrant nonprofit is based only in small part on the exhaustive paperwork underpinning its operations. Not many people will take the time to read and understand an organization's bylaws, independent audits, IRS 990 returns, charitable registration applications or certificates of good standing, but if you do, you'll likely begin weaving together the story of a dynamic and impactful foundation. Those dry documents eventually illustrate an intensive process that sprang from the ideas and energy of a broad support base drawn together by the passion and dedication of a handful of founding visionaries.

After three decades, Vital Ground is fortunate to remain connected to so many of the people who originally sparked its journey. So many more have joined along the way, serving as trustees, volunteering for committees, or simply offering a timely note of advice or encouragement.

Last year, the organization synthesized this decades-long collaboration into Vital Ground's One Landscape Initiative to ensure a resilient future for grizzlies and other wildlife in the Northern Rockies. If you joined our online anniversary celebration in September, you already know that vision has been translated into a new short film, which you can currently watch at ***vitalground.org***. If you haven't already, I urge you to take a few minutes to enjoy it—and to share it with friends once you have.

When we look back on 2020, few will remember it as the year Vital Ground celebrated its 30th anniversary. My hope, however, is that you'll never forget that your investments in nature will endure well beyond politics, pandemics and other challenges that lie ahead.

With deepest gratitude for your support of the One Landscape vision,

Ryan Lutey, Executive Director

PROJECT UPDATE

COMING FULL CIRCLE

BLACKFEET NATION AND VITAL GROUND PROTECT KEY GRIZZLY HABITAT

Thirty years after Doug and Lynne Seus founded Vital Ground and protected their first piece of grizzly habitat along Montana's Rocky Mountain Front, Vital Ground partnered with the Blackfeet Nation to return key habitat to tribal ownership just east of Glacier National Park. Surrounded by Blackfeet lands, the Kennedy Creek project area provides a habitat connection for grizzly bears, bull trout and countless other wildlife. It also lies in the shadow of Chief Mountain (pictured), a sacred Blackfeet site.

By Matt Hart

It's a sight that has sparked imaginations for countless generations: Montana's Rocky Mountain Front Range, rising snow-capped and jagged from the Great Plains like the spine of a great animal. The range's Blackfeet name translates as "Backbone of the World", and it carries a central significance in Vital Ground's story, too.

In 1991, shortly after founding the organization, Doug and Lynne Seus purchased 240 acres of prime grizzly bear habitat along the Front, just east of the vast Bob Marshall Wilderness. Now, as we celebrate Vital Ground's 30th anniversary, we've returned to the area. Farther north, on the eastern edge of Glacier National Park, Vital Ground recently completed its first collaborative land conservation project with the Blackfeet Nation, protecting 74 acres of rich wildlife habitat along Kennedy Creek.

Previously a private inholding surrounded by tribal lands, Vital Ground purchased the acreage before immediately transferring ownership to the Blackfeet. Kennedy Creek flows from mountain headwaters in Glacier through the project area, providing habitat lush with conifers, aspen and other vegetation and leading to heavy traffic from grizzly bears and other species. Before reaching the site, the waterway passes near Yellow Mountain and Chief Mountain, a prominent sacred location in Blackfeet cultural traditions.

"I am very pleased that Vital Ground was able to partner with the Blackfeet Nation to protect

(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 3)

the ecological integrity of the Chief Mountain-Yellow Mountain area," said Buzz Cobell, Director of Blackfeet Nation Fish and Wildlife. "Kennedy Creek is inhabited by one of the few populations of bull trout existing on the east slope of the Rocky Mountains. In addition, this area is used extensively by grizzly bears, moose, elk, deer and other important wildlife species. Thanks to our collaborative efforts this special area will continue to be wild and undeveloped."

The area's ecological and cultural significance spurred the Seuses to lead the project as they celebrated 30 years of protecting grizzly habitat. Vital Ground ambassador Bart the Bear II provided further inspiration and support after his predecessor, Bart the Bear, first motivated the Seuses to establish Vital Ground on behalf of wild grizzlies and all that share their range.

"We thank the Blackfeet Tribal Council for such strong leadership in shielding biodiversity," the Seuses said in a statement on the collaboration. "This project carries benefits for every living thing that stretch far beyond lines on a map. We know Bart is grateful for the opportunity to fund a significant land acquisition, home to a bounty of wildlife and an impressive list of plants."

The effort fits into a larger collaborative push to protect habitat in the Glacier foothills area. The Blackfeet Nation is working with numerous conservation partners to acquire similar inholdings to the project site, managing the land for habitat value through ecological restoration, retiring grazing leases and more.

Protecting buffer areas outside Glacier and Yellowstone represents an important prong of Vital Ground's One Landscape Initiative, our strategic effort to connect the Northern Rockies'

The Kennedy Creek area provides an important habitat buffer on the edge of Glacier National Park. Now returned to tribal ownership and stewardship, the project site and surrounding lands will be managed to maintain habitat value for grizzly bears, bull trout, moose, elk, deer and numerous other wildlife and plant species.

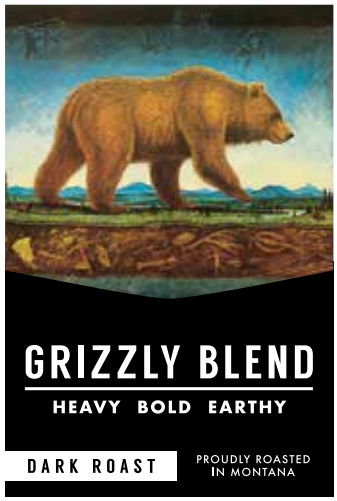
wild strongholds by conserving habitat in crucial movement areas at risk of harmful development. The Kennedy Creek project area was specifically prioritized in our region-wide planning for One Landscape, a collaborative effort involving more than 60 federal, tribal, state and independent wildlife experts.

"Protecting this irreplaceable wildlife habitat at the footsteps of Glacier National Park fits squarely within our One Landscape strategy," said Vital Ground Conservation Manager Mitch Doherty. "But this project goes beyond protecting land for wildlife. Working with members of the Blackfeet Nation, Vital Ground was able to return this land to the people who have been caring for it since time immemorial."

"Kennedy Creek is inhabited by one of the few populations of bull trout existing on the east slope of the Rocky Mountains," says Buzz Cobell, Director of Blackfeet Nation Fish and Wildlife. Vital Ground recently purchased a 74-acre private inholding along the waterway and returned the land to tribal ownership and stewardship.

The Seuses echoed that purpose while thanking the Vital Ground supporters who have carried the organization to its 30-year milestone.

"We want to express our gratitude to everyone whose support helped bring this property under conservation," the Seuses said. "This exceptional project pushes Vital Ground enthusiastically forward for future partnerships. Most of all, we are privileged and honored to return the stewardship of this sacred land to the Blackfeet Nation."



MONTANA COFFEE TRADERS
EST. 1981

Grizzly Blend logo art by Monte Dolack

YOUNG LIVING FOUNDATION

Clockwise from left: Doug Seus and Bart the Bear; Lynne Seus and Tank the Bear; Doug Seus and Bart the Bear II

30 YEARS FOR THE GREAT BEAR

A LOOK AT VITAL GROUND'S CONSERVATION LEGACY AND VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Thirty years ago, we started Vital Ground to honor our beloved Bart the Bear's life. He had to matter for much more than movies. We are so grateful for our bears and all of the people who have walked this trail with us to connect and protect over 600,000 acres in the Northern Rockies. As much as the wild creatures and plants and birds need true wilderness, our species needs it, too. For only in true wilderness, perhaps, can we restore ourselves. Thank you for joining us as we celebrate this milestone and for making it possible to create one massive, connected landscape for wildlife and people!

—Doug and Lynne Seus, co-founders

Rita Wolfe

The Path to 30: A Conservation Timeline

- **1990:** Doug and Lynne Seus and animal actor Bart the Bear establish The Vital Ground Foundation in Heber City, Utah.
- **1991:** Vital Ground protects its first land, the Toy Property (above), purchasing 240 acres of grizzly habitat along Montana's Rocky Mountain Front.
- **1997:** Vital Ground provides supporting funds for The Nature Conservancy's conservation easement on the 5,960-acre Dellwo Ranch east of Montana's Bob Marshall Wilderness, the first of many similar partner projects over the next decade.
- **2001:** Vital Ground begins protecting habitat in Idaho, purchasing 20 acres in the Selkirk Mountain foothills just south of the Canadian border. We've now protected over 1,000 acres in the Selkirks, including Bismark Meadows (below), a lush low-elevation haven for grizzlies and other wildlife.
- **2005:** Vital Ground moves to Missoula, Mont., and completes its first conservation easement: Bud Moore's 80-acre Coyote Forest in the Swan Valley.
- **2011:** Vital Ground purchases the 71-acre Yaak Mountain property along northwestern Montana's Kootenai River, beginning the ongoing Wild River project to protect this key wildlife corridor.
- **2015:** Leading its largest collaborative project to date, Vital Ground establishes the Alvord Lake Community Forest near Troy, Mont., protecting both key habitat and a public recreation resource.
- **2019:** The One Landscape Initiative begins, honing in our focus on 188,000 acres of crucial habitat that connect the Northern Rockies' wild strongholds.
- **2020:** Highlighting our 30th Anniversary, Doug and Lynne Seus lead the collaborative Kennedy Creek project with the Blackfeet Nation (see. p. 3).

Josh Smith

30 YEARS OF CONSERVATION

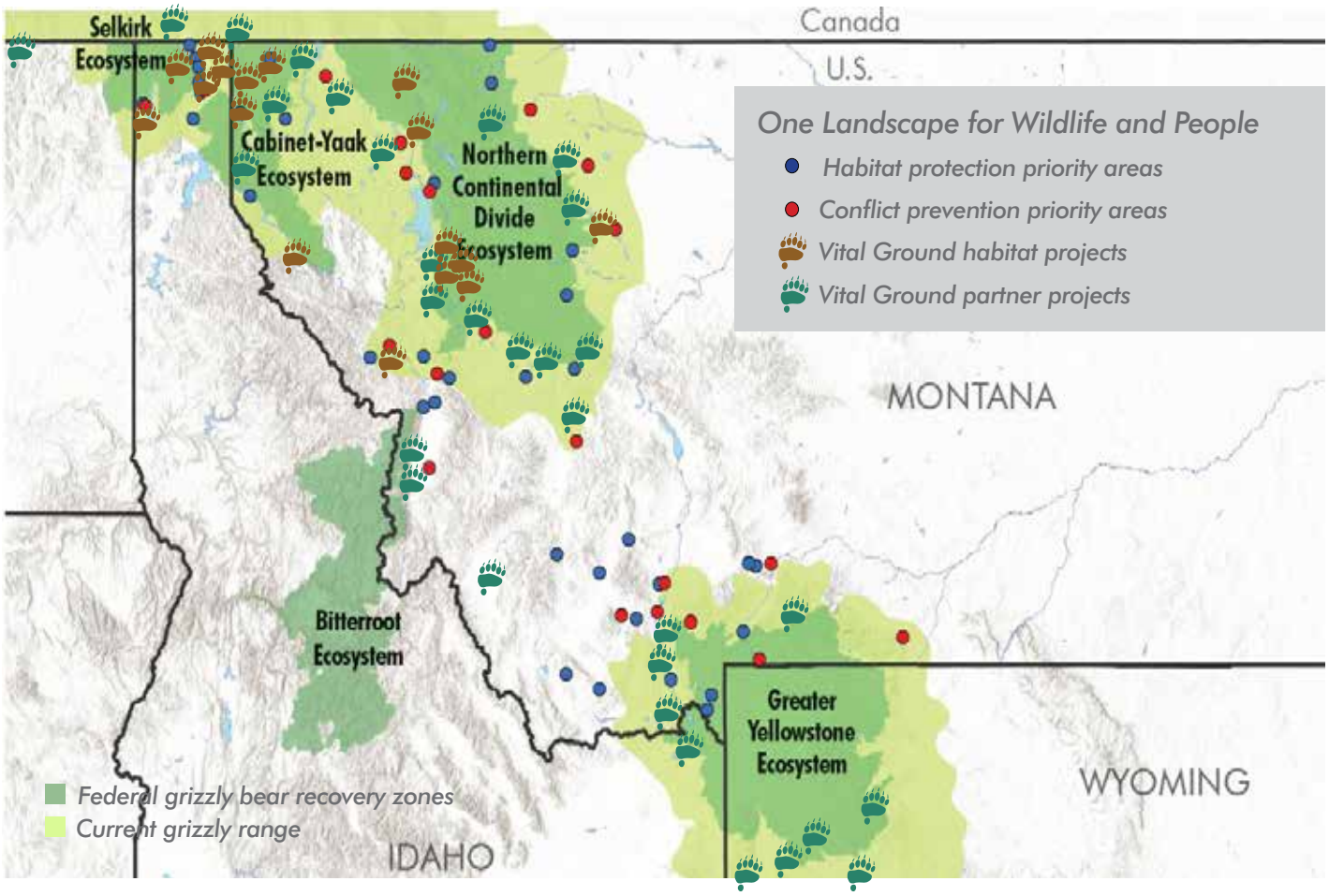
620,049
total acres (incl. partner projects)

129
partner projects supported

VITAL GROUND FOUNDATION

18
Vital Ground habitat acquisitions

25
Vital Ground conservation easements



WHAT'S NEXT: THE ONE LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE

153
habitat protection opportunities

33
priority protection areas

188,000
total acres of priority protection areas

84
conflict prevention opportunities

21
priority conflict prevention areas

56
conflict prevention parterships since 2018

THANK YOU, HABITAT HEROES!

For 30 years, contributors like you have saved habitat and helped wildlife stay safe on the landscape. This September, you stepped up again during our 30th Anniversary Celebration: ***You raised $182,000*** *in support of wildlife through our online auction! From all of us, a huge, griz-sized THANK YOU!*

Vital Ground board chair Kelly Johnson (left) and co-founders Doug and Lynne Seus thank attendees at the end of our virtual 30th Anniversary Celebration on September 18. If you missed the event, you can watch a recording of it along with other great videos on Vital Ground's YouTube Channel: ***www.youtube.com/forthegrizzly***

SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

A Lasting Commitment: Thank You, 30-Year Donors!

By Kim Davitt, Development Director

Besides maintaining some important relationships and drinking coffee every morning, I haven't done many things consistently for the last 30 years. That's not true for some of Vital Ground's donors, who have committed to the conservation of grizzly bears and protection of wildlife habitat for all 30 years of Vital Ground's history.

Two of them, Ronda and Terry O'Brien, found Vital Ground through their interest and appreciation of Bart the Bear. They met Bart at an early fundraiser and remain committed conservation supporters.

Another 30-year donor, Shari Sutherland, says, "Wow, 30 years, how they have flown by!" Shari's history with conservation stems back to experiencing love at first sight when she saw her first grizzly in Yellowstone National Park in 1989. She heard of Doug and Lynne Seus' early efforts to purchase land and partner with grizzly conservation organizations and felt compelled to help save habitat.

"I am glad Vital Ground is still here, doing good things and buying critical habitat for grizzlies," Shari says. "There really has been no group [still in existence] that has been only for bears, other than Vital Ground."

Sara Solaimanian and her sister Melanie grew up in grizzly country, hiking and riding horses near Yellowstone. Through their family's Fanwood Foundation, they continue the conservation legacy of their parents, Bob and Hope Stevens.

"I simply cannot imagine a world without nature," Sara says. "We want to make sure that children have a future that includes nature. We want to make sure ecosystems are intact."

Thirty-year Vital Ground donor Shari Sutherland hiking in Montana.

As we celebrate Vital Ground's 30th Anniversary this year, we are so thankful for all of you who have committed to protecting habitat. I've heard many long-term donors mention that they don't want habitat protected for their own self-interest, but rather for bears and all living creatures. Mimi McMillen summed up this passion to protect wildlife through habitat conservation when she wrote, "That is why I support Vital Ground – it IS Vital Ground!!!"

Thank you to all our inspiring 30-year donors*:

- Doug and Lynne Seus
- Doug Chadwick and Karen Reeves
- Terry and Ronda O'Brien
- Jon Davison and Sally Cruikshank
- The Cinnabar Foundation
- The Fanwood Foundation West
- Jeff and Susan Bridges
- Mimi McMillen
- Liberty Godshall
- Andrea Bonette
- Shari and Steve Sutherland
- Tom Coffee
- Larry Lasker
- Jack Hanna

**Please note: our record-keeping 30 years ago was not complete. If you're an early Vital Ground donor, please contact Kim at kdavitt@vitalground.org!*

Vital Ground Welcomes Two New Business Partners!

Business partners are a key part of Vital Ground's push toward a connected landscape for wildlife and people. Whether through a business membership, company grant or royalty agreement, business partnerships provide opportunities for companies of all sizes and types to align with habitat protection for grizzly bears and other species while showing company products, services and branding to a conservation-minded audience.

This year, we're pleased to welcome two new partners at the business member level, GREENROCK Batteries and Grizzly Broadband! Based in the Mountain West region, these businesses invest monthly in Vital Ground's wildlife habitat conservation work.

GREENROCK Batteries provide green, safe energy storage solutions for individuals and businesses. Their flagship product, The Saltwater Battery, is made from non-toxic, non-flammable, non-explosive materials, without rare-earth minerals or intensive mining practices. In addition to batteries, the company specializes in complete solar/battery power systems, and boasts the safest, most environmentally friendly storage solutions for your home and business. Learn more at *greenrockbatteries.com*.

GREENROCK
THE SALTWATER BATTERY

Solutions to Internet or technology problems can be difficult to find in rural areas. That's where Grizzly Broadband comes in. The company offers a one-stop-shop for all of your technology needs in Montana's Bitterroot Valley and beyond.

Rural areas have limited access to technology solutions. Grizzly Broadband believes everyone should have access to the best technology available, and they understand how frustrating it is not having access to the know-how needed. Whether it's computer repair, sales, technology fixes, point-to-point wireless, wireless Internet, or high-speed fiber-optic Internet – over 5,000 households and businesses trust Grizzly Broadband to solve their technology problems.

If you reside in western Montana and desire a stress-free experience, contact them at 406-363-2183 or go to *grizzlybb.com*.

GRIZZLY BROADBAND

Thanks to these great new partners, who join other businesses supporting conservation including Kodiak Cakes, Montana Coffee Traders, Grizzly Adams Brand and Young Living Essential Oils!

One Landscape: New Film Shows Potential for Connection

From Wyoming to British Columbia, the northern Rocky Mountains are home to some of North America's most iconic wildlife and wild lands. But the region's mountain strongholds are not all connected, with highways, railroads and houses splitting them. As the climate warms and the human footprint keeps growing, that fragmentation poses a problem for grizzly bears and other animals that must move to adapt.

Achieving a single, connected landscape for wildlife and people in the Northern Rockies is the goal of Vital Ground's One Landscape Initiative. Earlier this year, we were proud to release a five-minute short film directed by Eric Ian that highlights the science and conservation partnerships behind

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(continued from page 11)

the initiative.

"One Landscape is simply a knitting together of the strongholds that remain," explains author and Vital Ground trustee Douglas Chadwick in the film. "If we can build wildlife corridors—connectivity—between these remaining strongholds of wildlife, it will hold up over time."

Based on insight from more than 60 federal, tribal, state and independent wildlife experts, the One Landscape Initiative aims to protect 188,000 crucial acres on privately-owned lands that link the region's wild cores. From central Montana's Rocky Mountain Front to the Kootenai Valley in Idaho's far northern panhandle, the new film highlights the partnerships that make the vision possible, profiling several landowners who have partnered with Vital Ground to voluntarily limit development and protect habitat on their properties through conservation agreements.

"Many feel as I do that we're very lucky to live in a place where bears exist," says Mary Sexton, owner of Glen Willow Ranch near Choteau, Mont. "We do have a lot of wildlife come through, plus this has been productive farm ground for over a century. I want it to remain not only in agriculture, but also as good habitat for wildlife."

Through land acquisitions and conservation partnerships in key locations, the One Landscape Initiative will not only protect working farms, ranches and forests for future generations, but also protect animals' ability to move and adapt to a changing climate and environment. By focusing on the specific locations that help link a larger landscape, it will create a more resilient future for countless species.

"When I go out and walk on the ground that Vital Ground protected … and I'm looking at elk tracks and seeing grizzly scratches on the trees, Vital Ground is making that real," summarizes Chadwick late in the film. "This is saving nature, on a large scale and a connected scale."

Featuring landowner interviews and stunning videography, Vital Ground's new five-minute short film shows the potential of the One Landscape Initiative to achieve a single, connected landscape for wildlife and people in the Northern Rockies. Watch the film now on Vital Ground's homepage: ***www.vitalground.org***

Lolo Creek Grizzly Sighting a Good Sign for Connectivity

In late September, shortly after Vital Ground celebrated its 30th anniversary online with supporters from around the country, some news from closer to home put extra wind in our sails. Our executive director signed onto the virtual staff meeting with a big grin one morning and we soon learned why: Ryan had been among the first to hear about a grizzly bear sighting along Lolo Creek, just a few miles upstream from his home on the edge of the Bitterroot Mountains.

By the 1980s, biologists deemed grizzlies functionally extinct from the Bitterroot Ecosystem that sprawls across central Idaho and Montana's western edge. But as populations have rebounded elsewhere, bears have been documented crossing highways, rivers and railroads to return to this vast habitat, with the number of sightings on the rise in recent years. That bodes well for the eventual co-mingling of grizzlies from Greater Yellowstone and northwestern Montana, as Yellowstone bears are moving toward the southern Bitterroot and Montana bears toward its northern reaches.

Still, these wanderers—including the Lolo Creek bear—have been primarily young males, and their footloose journeys often involve considerable risk of trouble with humans. To help lower that risk, Vital Ground recently partnered on several coexistence efforts in the area, supporting the Bitterroot Bear Aware Collaborative's sanitation, education and outreach efforts as well as a student-led initiative bringing bear-proof garbage disposal and educational signage to Corvallis High School.

With enough coexistence work and a bit of luck, female grizzlies will eventually return to the Bitterroot as well, and one of these days Ryan might just show up on our screens with an even larger grin and news of the Bitterroot's first grizzly cubs of the 21st century!

Grizzlies, especially young males, may travel great distances during fall as they search for food. A recent sighting along Lolo Creek in Montana's Bitterroot Mountains is the latest sign of bears reclaiming historic range in the area.

Great American Outdoors Act a Win for Wildlife and People

During a time of upheaval in the United States, conservation of our land and water offers a rare source of national unity.

With leadership from Montana's congressional delegation, the Great American Outdoors Act became law this summer after impressive votes of bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress. The Act's hallmarks include funding for longstanding maintenance backlogs on public lands and, crucially, a $900 million annual baseline for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Established in 1964 but frequently diverted to other federal appropriations, LWCF directs royalty fees from off-shore drilling toward community conservation ranging from hiking and fishing access sites to city parks and municipal nature preserves.

Several Vital Ground projects have utilized LWCF, most recently our Glacier Gateway Project, an ongoing collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service to protect public access and wildlife habitat connectivity in Montana's North Fork Flathead Valley, just west of Glacier National Park.

Big thanks to the many conservation champions who pushed this historic bill across the finish line!

CONNECTION OR EXTINCTION

THE HARD ROAD AHEAD FOR GRIZZLIES AND EARTH'S BIODIVERSITY

Philip DeManczuk

By Tatum McConnell

Earth's animal and plant species are incredibly adaptable. Throughout our planet's history, they've coped with events ranging from ice ages to asteroids. Evolution allows life to respond to change across generations while behavioral and habitat shifts can take place even faster, within one animal's lifetime. When an environment is disturbed, some species adapt, others evolve into new species, and those unable to keep up go extinct.

Here's one recent example: the nesting habits of songbirds. Researchers have found that as warm spring temperatures cause snow to melt sooner each year, insects mate earlier. In response, songbirds that feed newborn insects to their chicks are laying eggs earlier to match the timing of the greatest abundance of insects.

There's a problem, however. The birds aren't adapting quickly enough. They're still showing up late to the baby-bug-buffet.

As a Vital Ground supporter, you probably know that climate change is accelerating at an alarming rate, bringing with it higher average temperatures, prolonged droughts, extreme wildfires and floods, and myriad other impacts on ecosystems. Pair that with human land-use patterns that continue to divide and remove wild habitat and you're left with an unfortunate outlook for many of our wild species.

With all this in mind, scientists and conservationists are increasingly emphasizing the importance of protecting biodiversity and keeping ecosystems intact. This means considering the unique role of every species in an environment. The extinction of any particular fungi, amphibian, bird or tree will almost certainly impact other species, whether those relationships are obvious or not.

Recent research places Earth's current extinction rate at roughly 1,000 times its historical average, while 80 percent of biodiversity hotspots remain unprotected. As of 2019, only 12.5 percent of

land and 3 percent of marine environments were protected. If our natural ecosystems are to persist, we need to do better.

THE PROMISE OF CORRIDORS

At the radical forefront of current thought about how to protect our natural spaces and build resilient ecosystems is Dr. Jodi Hilty, a conservation scientist and president of the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Y2Y), a major Vital Ground partner. When we talk about conservation, she explained, we need to think about it strategically and protect the habitat that will be the most impactful.

"In the U.S., we preserve a lot of rock and ice mountains, and we do a very poor job of preserving things like sagebrush sea and Midwest grasslands," Dr. Hilty said. "From an ecological protection perspective, you'd want to look at representation, redundancy, and connectivity."

Connectivity represents the central focus of Dr. Hilty and Y2Y's work, as well as Vital Ground's. Her latest book, *Corridor Ecology*, explores the idea of habitat corridors—spaces that link wild populations through uninterrupted, high-quality habitat.

Large preserves like Yellowstone or Glacier National Park are a good start, but for species that need a lot of space—like wolverine, caribou, or grizzly bears—they aren't adequate to support healthy populations. Dr. Hilty says that for wolverines, the only conservation tactic that will work lies at the landscape scale, and that means developing connectivity.

This is where Vital Ground comes in. For the past several years, we have partnered with Y2Y on our ongoing Wild River Project in Montana's northwestern corner, purchasing 52 acres of key habitat that was once slated to become a residential subdivision. This land lies along the Kootenai River between the Cabinet and Purcell mountain ranges, each with small struggling populations of grizzly bears. While the acreage may seem small, keystone projects like this carry landscape-scale impact, in this case shoring up land that may allow two isolated grizzly populations to connect.

When it comes to biodiversity protection, there's good news for fans of the grizzly bear.

"If you get it right for grizzly bears, you get it right for a lot of other critters," Dr. Hilty said, citing a study on umbrella species from Montana State University. "If we get connectivity right for them, it's probably going to work for things like wolverines, mountain lions, and other animals that need to move at that scale."

NO TIME TO LOSE

In September the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity released their latest report, highlighting the urgent need for conservation projects like those Vital Ground and Y2Y are completing. If we don't act now to protect ecosystems, the report concludes, we are in immediate danger of losing 23.7 percent—nearly a quarter!—of Earth's species.

What's also becoming increasingly clear is that this isn't just an issue for our wild species. Research estimates that humans benefit from Earth's goods and services to the tune of $72 trillion per year. This includes clean air, clean water, productive soil, fuel, natural hazard prevention, pollution reduction, and countless other impacts—not to mention the cultural and spiritual impacts of nature, which Dr. Hilty noted are increasingly considered as valuable to protect.

By targeting habitat protection effectively and efficiently, and drawing from the best information that Western science, Indigenous knowledge and local communities have to offer, organizations like Vital Ground and Y2Y are taking bold steps to preserve ecosystems in lasting ways. With the need more urgent than ever, we continue to follow the words of Vital Ground co-founder Lynne Seus: "Where the grizzly can walk, the Earth is healthy and whole."

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MISSOULA, MT 59801

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

In support of this mission, we:

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

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

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