

PROTECTING WILD SPACES & HAPPY PLACES

WOOD RIVER LAND TRUST

SPRING 2021



WOOD
RIVER
LAND
TRUST



LESSONS FROM THE RANCH

Building partnerships for better outcomes

LOCAL SOLUTIONS TO GLOBAL ISSUES

Understanding how to take local action in the face of global pollinator decline

WHERE TO NEXT?

Explore and discover the Wood River Land Trust Preserves

WOOD RIVER LAND TRUST



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*Our mission is to protect and sustain
the treasured landscapes and life-
giving waters of the Wood River Valley
and inspire love for this special place
for generations to come.*

Cover Photo: John Finnell



A LETTER FROM

SCOTT BOETTGER



There have been so many challenges this past year. Sometimes you have to stop and think about the wins that sneak up on you after you've been holding steady and just taking the next right step.

For instance, after many years of planning, land acquisitions, and partnering with neighboring landowners, we finally broke ground and completed the Lower Howard Preserve river restoration project this March. Part of an ongoing 1-mile restoration effort, the project was the first in a series we've been leading throughout the Valley. The work of bringing partners along, getting permit approvals, and addressing public concerns finally paid off with little fanfare, but will result in lasting improvements to fish habitat and a healthier river; providing a model for future restoration efforts throughout the Valley.

The article about Rinker Rock Creek Ranch (pp. 2-5), and what we're learning from the University of Idaho's research on the property, is another example of what's possible when we lean into the difficult work of building partnerships for better outcomes. What started in 2014, as an effort to simply protect the property and Sage Grouse habitat from sprawling residential development has blossomed into miles of restored streams feeding into the Big Wood River, thousands of acres of land where wildlife can now move more freely, and tremendous opportunities for hiking and biking.

It's our steady commitment to the next right step that has protected over 26,000 acres of incredible open space in our Valley over the years. With your support, we can continue to push for even more successes as we work toward protecting places like Warm Springs Ranch, restoring the Big Wood River, opening up new preserves for the community, reducing the impacts of growth, and making a difference now for future generations.

Yes, this past year has brought its challenges, but we've also seen great progress toward a larger vision. Thank you for your support and all that you make possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Boettger'.

Scott Boettger, Executive Director

RIVER RESTORATION

We developed a series of videos that describe the restoration efforts at the Howard Preserve. Watch the videos and learn more at woodriverlandtrust.org/restore/river-education or use the QR code:





Photo: T. Jones

LESSONS FROM THE RANCH

While she gazes over the expansive rolling hills of the Rinker Rock Creek Ranch, the landscape tugs at Cameron Packer’s heart. As Operations Manager of the Ranch, she knows these 10,394 acres better than most people. From the minute the Land Trust partnered with the Rinker Family and The Nature Conservancy to protect the Ranch, Cameron knew she belonged out there. Monitoring the wildlife that find refuge on the Ranch, working with the community to enhance access for sportsmen and bikers, restoring a major tributary of the Big Wood River, and bearing witness to the incredible lessons that this land can teach us have become Cameron’s calling.

“[Sagebrush Steppe] is not an ecosystem that folks are as familiar with but there’s a lot of beauty here. There’s a lot to learn and it’s a somewhat fragile ecosystem. From invasive

species, to risk of wildfire, to drought; there are all kinds of things that can threaten the species and the ecosystem. It’s important that people can engage and learn about that and hopefully start to understand it and move to want to protect it in the long term”

Cameron started her relationship with the Ranch when she was earning her Masters in Natural Resources from the University of Idaho. When she graduated, she spent a couple of field seasons out on the Ranch and eventually started to work full time for the Land Trust as Stewardship Coordinator. When the University of Idaho took over the day-to-day operations of the Ranch, she took the position of Operations Manager of Rinker Rock Creek Ranch with the University of Idaho.



Photo: John Finnell



Photo: John Finnell

One of the first projects that the Rinker Rock Creek partners tackled was the restoration of the main stem of Rock Creek - the last major tributary of the Big Wood River before it reaches Magic Reservoir.

Cameron says, "Rock Creek runs year-round; it's spring-fed at its headwaters so you get clear, clean water flowing year-round. This contributes to the flows in the Big Wood throughout the year, so that's a really important factor in terms of the watershed health."

Streams like the Rock Creek tributary of the Big Wood River are critical habitat for fish. Restoring tributary health makes the whole system stronger.

"We've done a lot of stream restoration and have removed fish passage barriers so there's a lot more connectivity throughout the system and connectivity to the Big Wood River. These projects have improved the overall health of the riparian areas and provide better fish habitat."



Photo: T. Jones

When it comes to humans, though, the story isn't quite as cut and dry. Due to the sheer scale of the Ranch, Cameron has had to get creative with managing human use throughout the property. The vastness of the property makes it difficult to patrol all the time, so Cameron is working on increasing the visibility of the value of the Ranch. Through community outreach efforts, she hopes to instill a sense of community responsibility and stewardship of this unique and special place.

“We’re looking forward to engaging the community more and more. As the research and outreach programs grow, we can continue to engage members of the public as well as K through 12 school kids in various types of citizen science. As the population across the West continues to grow, I hope that the Ranch can be a place where people can really connect to open spaces and to this rangeland ecosystem and its many uses. It’s unique and different and is something that people may not have experienced before. This can be a space where they can really learn about what’s out here on this sage steppe land that they otherwise might have just driven through.”

As Cameron prepares to leave the Ranch for the day, she carefully closes the gates surrounding some of the cow pastures. Many of the old barbed wire and woven wire fences have been replaced with high-tensile electric fences that lay down when the pastures are not in use. The Wood River Land Trust began the work of implementing these fencing replacements and that work continues today - overseen by University of Idaho and the Rinker Rock Creek Ranch Advisory Board.

“When we have livestock in a certain pasture, we can send an electric current through the wire. When a particular pasture isn’t in use, the fence can be laid down flat on the ground, opening up migration corridors for wildlife.”

This style of fence does double duty; improving both wildlife habitat and cattle management capacity. It is also less costly to build and maintain. “We’ve had a lot of interest in this style of fence from both producers and land managers.”

Science and research help us understand what is going on around us beyond just casual observations like this looks good or this doesn’t look as good. The data that University of Idaho faculty are collecting through research help us understand trends and what leads to a good outcome versus a less desirable outcome. In the longer-term that helps us make good decisions now, that can have an impact for a long time.

“Collaboration and collaboratively managing land takes time. It’s a big effort but it’s worth it in the long run. Finding solutions to problems that work for all of the groups involved leads to beneficial change. One thing most folks can get behind is making sure our lands are managed in a way that is sustainable, and that involves some compromise for everybody in order to meet collective goals.”

RRCR Advisory Board Members Include:

University of Idaho
Wood River Land Trust
The Nature Conservancy Idaho
Idaho Cattle Association
Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission
Idaho Department of Fish & Game
Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission
Central Idaho Rangelands Network
Office of Species Conservation
US Fish & Wildlife Service
Natural Resources Conservation Service



Photo: Bob Griffith



Photo: John Finnell

GIDDY UP FOR GOOD

Rinker Rock Creek Ranch offers countless miles of recreational opportunities in a beautiful setting. It is the perfect setting for training for gravel riding events like the Be Good Foundation's Giddy Up Challenge. We are excited to share that the Wood River Land Trust is a beneficiary of the Giddy Up Challenge 2021. This event challenges athletes across the globe to run or ride the elevation of Everest to benefit organizations that protect the outdoor spaces and natural places we cherish. This year, WRLT employee, Liz Pedersen will be training out at Rinker Rock Creek Ranch. Tune into our social media channels to follow her journey. You can also sign up for yourself at www.giddyup.rebeccasprivateidaho.com/

Looking over the cattle at pasture, it becomes clear that, to Cameron, finding win-win solutions for wildlife, livestock, and recreationalists is a driving force in her work.

The innovation happening at Rinker Rock Creek Ranch is the product of a shared vision for the property. By having a management plan, and a management team that reflects the multi-faceted goals for the property, we can harness the power of a diverse set of partnerships. We can empower our community to feel ownership of the land. We can use cutting edge fencing technology to protect wildlife and better manage livestock. We can manage users to create areas of solitude for wildlife. And we can restore tributaries and connect them to the Big Wood River so that our overall fishery is healthier. We can use science and data to help livestock producers throughout the state manage the rangeland resources in sustainable ways.

“

Rangelands are unique because their beauty is a little more subtle. It takes some time to adjust to it. It's not as obvious as a mountain lake or a snow-capped peak but the more time you spend out on rangelands and in places like Rock Creek the more you notice all of the little things that contribute to the bigger beautiful picture. The wild flowers in the spring or the beautiful moody skies in the fall; I love the open vastness. It's just gorgeous.

-Cameron Packer

”

THINKING GLOBALLY

ACTING LOCALLY

Challenges like climate change, pollution, and habitat loss are overwhelming when you think of them on a global scale. They are problems that no one person can solve. So what is a concerned citizen to do? When we think globally, and act locally, we can start to tackle bigger questions in our own backyard. Here in the Wood River Valley there are many ways to do that. The Wood River Land Trust Pollinator Initiative is just the start.

The 10-acre Pollinator Meadow at Colorado Gulch Preserve brings first-hand awareness to the plight of native pollinators through habitat restoration and community education. Pollinators are central to the health of any productive ecosystem, but their populations are currently declining across the globe - like Monarch Butterflies that have declined by 90% in the West.

Pollinators allow plants to reproduce, and help create genetic diversity amongst our plant populations. They are critical to our food system, as many crops rely on pollination. Habitat destruction, the misuse of pesticides, and climate change are all contributing to the declining numbers of these important pollinators.

Volunteering at our Pollinator Meadow is a way to help combat habitat loss for these important creatures right in your own neighborhood. This Spring, join the Wood River Land Trust as we try to help tackle this global problem in our own backyard. Check out our website for details on how you can volunteer and how you can do this in your own yard as well.



LEAVING A LEGACY

A Special Note from Past Board Chair, Kathie Levison:

Starting in the late 1950's when I was a teen, then as a mother, and now as a grandmother, Sun Valley has been a special happy place for my entire family. The growth and development that I have seen over the years have been astounding. And I know (we all do) more growth and change are on the horizon as more people are discovering our unique Valley.

Recently, friends and I snowshoed to the top of the ridge above the Wood River Land Trust's Independence Creek Preserve located in the Elkhorn neighborhood. From this vantage point where the Preserve accesses the Bureau of Land Management trails, looking east we had a view of the snow-covered hills so close to town. I remember as a young woman riding horseback in what is now these Elkhorn neighborhoods when they were open space.

As a Board member, I have learned first-hand how critical The Wood River Land Trust's work of preserving publicly accessible open spaces like Independence Creek Preserve is for people and wildlife. This preserve is one of many special places that the Land Trust has protected over the past 26 years.

Because my family and I value our way of life in this beautiful Valley, I have made a bequest in my estate plan to the Wood River Land Trust. For us, it is critical to ensure the continuation of the Land Trust's work of protecting the land and rivers for generations to come.

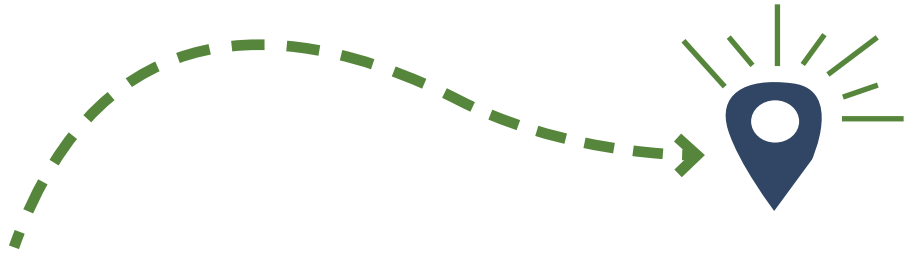
Kathie Levison,
WRLT Board Member

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Plan your legacy for the Valley

Join Wood River Land Trust in protecting the Valley through your will or estate plan.

Please contact Courtney Jelaco at (208) 788 3947
or cjelaco@woodriverlandtrust.org



WHERE TO NEXT?



EXPLORE & DISCOVER THE WOOD RIVER LAND TRUST PRESERVES

From cold streams to high mountain peaks, the Wood River Valley truly has it all! Whether you're here on vacation or needing ideas for your next staycation, exploring this Valley is always a good idea. All of the wild spaces on this page are protected from development because of your support. Now it's time for you to get out and enjoy them! Check out the QR codes for virtual tours of these special places.

COOL OFF WITH A FLOAT!

Valley Creek Preserve in Stanley, Idaho is the perfect place to enjoy the beauty of the Sawtooth Mountains along the river. Valley Creek is a tributary of the Salmon River and is a great spot for a mellow float in inner tubes or a SUP board. Use the QR code to join us a virtual river float.



HIT THE TRAILS!

If you're looking for mellow hiking or biking trails with vast scenic vistas, Quigley Canyon is for you. Quigley Canyon is over 1,200 acres and is protected with a conservation easement. This special property is a community treasure and the perfect place to enjoy an evening hike or bike. For more information check out the QR code.



CATCH A FISH!

The Big Wood River and its tributaries offer some of the best fly fishing spots in the country. Even though this Valley has faced unprecedented growth in the past few years, there are still protected public access points for you and your family to enjoy the lifeblood of our Valley. Boxcar Bend Preserve, Draper Wood River Preserve, Colorado Gulch Preserve, and Howard Preserve are amazing places to spend an afternoon on the water. Use the QR code to plan your own fishing trip.



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With today's ever-changing landscape and the need to conserve what matters most, your gift to the Land Trust has renewed importance. Richard Carr, a conservationist and former chair of the Land Trust, knew the importance of taking action to conserve the lands and waters we all love. He also recognized that our community is only as strong as those who care.

With a gift of \$5,000 or more, you'll join a group of conservation leaders who care deeply about saving our Valley's critical landscapes while there's still time. As a member of the Richard Carr Society, you will receive invitations to special events and updates focused on the difference you are making.

For more information call Courtney Jelaco at 208-788-3947.

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WOOD RIVER LAND TRUST



119 E. Bullion Street
Hailey, Idaho 83333
www.woodriverlandtrust.org

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CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Spring Cleanup at the BCRD's Native Plant Arboretum
May 4 4-6 pm Intersection of the Bike Path & Fox Acres Road in Hailey

Restoration and Weed Pull with the ERC

May 8 10am-12pm Simons/Bauer Preserve
June 5 10am-12pm Howard Preserve
July 10 10am-12pm Boxcar Bend Preserve

Colorado Gulch Pollinator Meadow Work Days (Kid Friendly)

June 3 12-4 pm Colorado Gulch Preserve
June 10 12-4 pm Colorado Gulch Preserve
June 16 12-4 pm Colorado Gulch Preserve
June 24 12-4 pm Colorado Gulch Preserve

Sharps Fire Stream Restoration with TNC, Idaho Dept. Fish, & Game, and additional partners

July 2 Time TBD Location Available Upon Sign-up

Trail Work Day

July 17 Time TBD Simons/Bauer Preserve

Sign-up online at woodriverlandtrust.org/volunteer

SAVE THE DATE!

SKETCHING FIELD NOTES
JULY 23, 9-11 AM
DRAPER PRESERVE

Join us for a 2-hour course on field notes and sketching with local artist Poo Wright-Pulliam. After a lesson in wildflower & bird anatomy, you will have the chance to practice your own field sketching while overlooking the gorgeous Crox Creek Wetlands. Find out more on our website!