

PROTECTING WILD SPACES & HAPPY PLACES

WOOD RIVER LAND TRUST

SPRING 2022



**BELIEVING IN THE TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE:
ENVIRONMENT, ECONOMY, & PEOPLE**
Visionary thinking shows that conservation and community housing are not only possible, but mutually beneficial.

**THE QUEEN'S CROWN
PROPERTY**
A family's land is preserved for wildlife, for the community, and for generations to come.

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DONORS**
We couldn't do the work we do without the generous support of our community.

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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.

A LETTER FROM THE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Today, Tomorrow and Forever. The three words that embody the Wood River Land Trust.

When I first started at the Land Trust in 1997, I never could have imagined the outpouring of support that the Land Trust evokes from the community today. Our values and commitment to preserving land and caring for our river have resonated over years, and through decades. Thanks to generous support from our community, we've been able to accomplish so much. You make all of this possible, and I am overwhelmed with gratitude.

What we are doing today and plan to do tomorrow has never been more urgent. As I look at a new year, building on the momentum of the last, I am feeling energized about the "forever" part of our commitment.

This winter, we hosted our Thinking Globally, Acting Locally speaker series at The Community Library in Ketchum. Each topic highlighted the visionary work you make possible through the Land Trust, and framed it in a larger regional context.

In January, we built on our long history of advocating for smart growth practices while hosting Elaine Clegg of Idaho Smart Growth. This critical and timely topic is the focus of this newsletter. We'll discuss smart growth principles and why they're important as we face immense growth pressures in our Valley; and we'll talk about how one project in particular is demonstrating that the strategic placement of community housing and conservation are not only possible, but mutually beneficial.

In February, Brian Cluer talked about innovative ways to implement river restoration. It became clear that some of the most meaningful restoration opportunities in the Valley are along the Hailey Greenway, and are only feasible because of the preservation efforts we've accomplished there.

In March, Keith Christensen inspired us to think about the leadership role the Land Trust can play when designing an inclusive outdoors. Due to the proximity of our preserves to town centers, and through the creative visions of our staff and partners, we could become an iconic example for other communities to follow when ensuring that outdoor spaces are emancipatory and empowering for all members of our community.

Today. Tomorrow. Forever.

Together we are realizing this commitment. We are so grateful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Boettger". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial letter.

Scott Boettger, Executive Director



BELIEVING IN THE TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE: ENVIRONMENT, ECONOMY, & PEOPLE

Visonary thinking shows that conservation and strategic placement of community housing are not only possible, but mutually beneficial.

By Charlotte Stevenson

What is it that makes this valley so special? There are many answers to that question, but most include a mention of character—little moments with others that make this valley more than just a place to live, but also a true home. You know these moments—the casual conversation with our favorite barista, seeing our kids' teachers out on the trails, hiring a fishing guide for the day, but finding out you have so much in common that you end up with a genuine friend, going out for a beer, and running into three other tables full of folks you know who live and work here.

But we are facing a serious affordable housing crisis, and because of that, a serious threat to the character of this Valley. Although unprecedented Covid-induced movement out of cities has brought an influx of people to Blaine County, the results of a recent housing action plan survey indicate that long-term trends are responsible for the threat we're under. A decline of rental housing, the increase in short-term vacation rentals, and the misalignment of housing costs and income for local workers indicate that 1% of local residents (approximately 3,401 households) are currently experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness - with many more just barely keeping their heads above water.

At a public "State of the Valley" forum hosted by the Wood River Womens' Foundation in February 2022, community leaders shared their shock at the number of professional, hard-working households in need of assistance. But the solution of adding more sprawling development, as many towns have done over the last few decades, is not possible in this valley. Ironically, the very limitations on development in this valley—steep slopes, meandering river floodplain, National Forest, and other preserved public lands—are what has made this valley such a desirable place to live. "Something we probably all agree on," said Josh Johnson of the Idaho Conservation League, "is that one of our reasons for moving here was the environment." This leads to the critical question—how is it possible to develop land and save it at the same time?

RESTORING A PROPERTY FOR THE BENEFIT OF PEOPLE AND ENVIRONMENT

The Wood River Land Trust is proposing a unique solution to address two problems at the same time. Recently, the Land Trust acquired a 15-acre riverfront property in Hailey, Idaho as an opportunity to provide affordable housing as well as restore and protect that portion of the Big Wood River and its surrounding habitats.



This unique opportunity was possible because of two individuals who wanted to demonstrate that conservation and community housing can both be achieved. David Anderson, a former board member of Wood River Land Trust with a long history of supporting conservation throughout the West and nationally, was able to negotiate an agreement with the owner, Mark Caplow for this unique project. Mr. Caplow wanted to contribute to providing a solution to the affordable housing crisis.

The property spans across a section of the Big Wood River. On the east side of the river, next to an existing neighborhood of single family homes, the site of an old sawmill inspired an opportunity. The Land Trust sees this part of the parcel as a prime candidate for orderly growth, a term used to describe the development of parcels of underutilized land surrounded by other development, utilities, and infrastructure. The Land Trust plans to partner with a non-profit housing organization to build sustainable, efficient housing units with deed restrictions for workers earning between 80-140% of the Area Median Income (AMI), which, according to the recent housing survey, includes teachers, health care workers, firefighters, police officers, hospitality and recreation employees.

Although this housing will be a small part of the solution for the housing crisis, it has the potential to be a model for future sustainable development.

“We saw an opportunity to embrace growth, but in a way that protects our natural resources,” says Keri York, Lands Program Director at the Land Trust.



Please note that this graphic is a visual representation and is not meant to verify property boundaries. For more information, or for complete parcel information, please visit the Blaine County GIS website.



Like many mountain-west communities, Blaine County has seen sprawling large-parcel land development threaten the river floodplain, contribute to fish population declines, and fragment wildlife habitat and migration corridors. The remaining eight acres of property, ties into the Land Trust’s plans for a full scale restoration at Lions Park, which could take five to ten years. Near-term plans are to restore both river banks with native vegetation to prevent erosion, secure and unofficial public trail along the west bank to ensure public access, and protect one and a half acres of cottonwood forest on the property to provide connectivity to the nearby 470-acre Hailey Greenway.



The west side of the river is a parking lot covering an old dump and technically a brownfield site, a term used by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to describe a possible redevelopment site which is complicated by the potential presence of hazardous contaminants. With the help of EPA and other funds, the Land Trust and partners at the City of Hailey, Blaine County, and the Flood Control District can revitalize this land, reconnecting the river floodplain and side channels to the nearby Croy Creek wetlands.

“Reconnecting these fragmented habitats is critical for wildlife, particularly trout that use smaller side channels and wetlands for spawning and rearing,” says Ryan Santo, River Program Director at the Land Trust. “Allowing the river to return to its natural floodplain in the west will also protect human structures to the east,” adds Ryan.

NOT SUCH A RADICAL IDEA

This type of development—creating energy-efficient, affordable housing around existing infrastructure with a variety of transportation options (walking, busing, biking and driving)—is not a new idea. In fact, it has a name—Smart Growth. Born decades ago as a solution to urban sprawl, it became a national movement with its own EPA program, guiding communities across the country as they try to find more sustainable ways to balance population growth and environmental protection.





Mixing land uses



Encouraging community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions



Directing development towards existing communities and Providing a variety of transportation choices



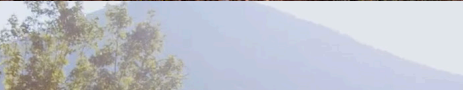
Taking advantage of compact design and Creating a range of housing opportunities and choices

10 PRINCIPLES OF SMART GROWTH

Smart growth is an overall approach to development that encourages a mix of building types and uses, diverse housing and transportation options, development within existing neighborhoods, and robust community engagement. The 10 principles, developed several decades ago are considered the foundation of a smart growth approach.



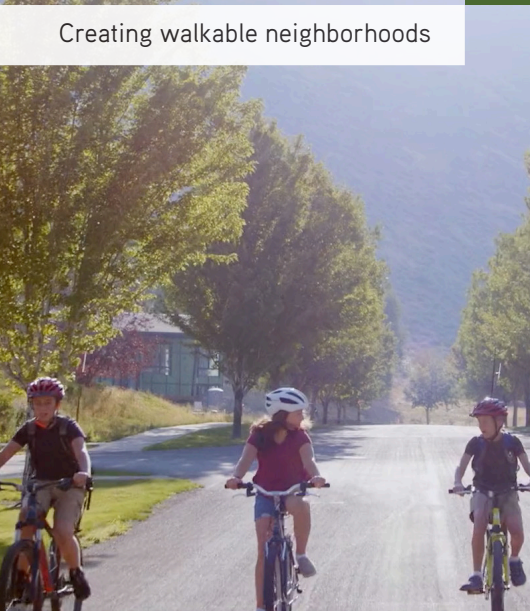
Making development decisions predictable



Creating walkable neighborhoods



Fostering distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place



Preserving open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas

The EPA's 2017 Report, Smart Growth Fixes for Climate Adaptation and Resilience, contributes to a growing body of evidence that smart growth can reduce carbon emissions, and protect air quality by creating compact, energy efficient development around existing infrastructure, reducing the heavy carbon emissions of long commutes in vehicles. The report also recommends denser, connected development to reduce land disturbance and storm water run-off, restoration of natural river floodplain to prevent unwanted flooding, and restoration of wetlands and riparian forest cover to protect water supplies in the face of drought.

Elaine Clegg of Idaho Smart Growth who is advising the Land Trust says that the key to success is the “triple bottom line,” including a “strong economy, a healthy natural environment, and happy people.”

PROGRESS IN OTHER WESTERN TOWNS

Other mountain towns facing housing-crises for local workers have attempted projects striving toward the triple bottom line. In 2021, the Aspen Ski Company built a 43-unit, deed-restricted condo-complex with grocery stores, shops, childcare, and restaurants, just 25 minutes from downtown Aspen, Colorado. In addition, the complex is carbon-neutral with solar panels, a bike share station, a bus line, and electric vehicle charging stations.

North and South Lake Tahoe in California have gone through extensive multi-year planning processes bringing counties, cities, and stakeholders together to analyze housing needs within each AMI category. Now these collaboratives are in the process of bringing hundreds of housing units online in the next 5 years.

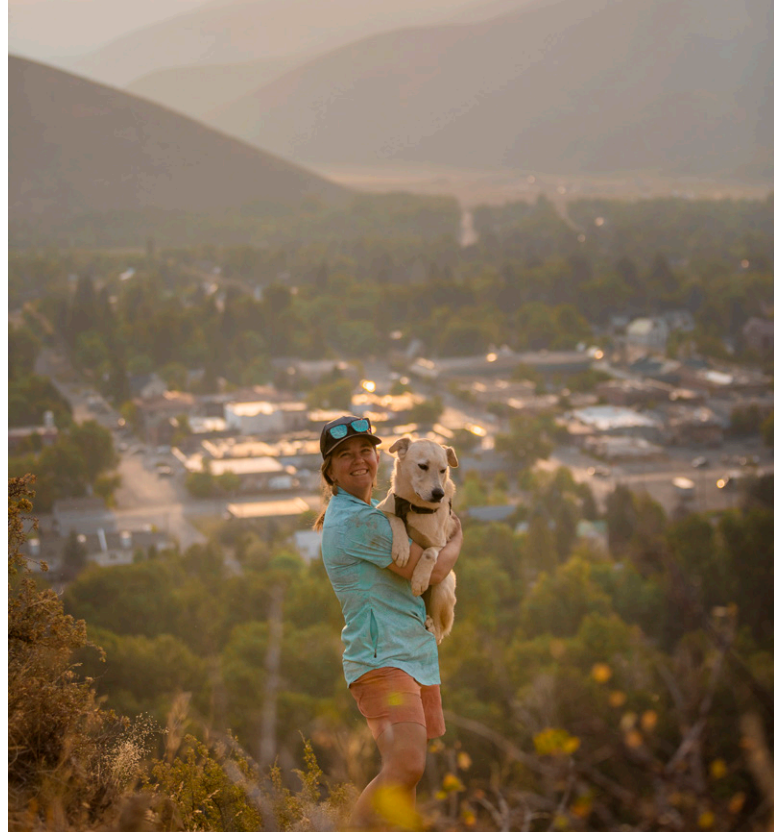
Facing fast paced population growth and land development, Gallatin County near Bozeman, Montana developed a community plan in 2020 to coordinate land use development patterns and deliver community services and infrastructure efficiently, while still protecting important environmental resources like water quality, wetlands, trail systems and open space.



A SCALABLE MODEL

Keri says that a regional cooperative like those in Montana and California is an example of what might be possible in the Wood River Valley. She says this project will be a great example of how a single property can achieve both conservation and affordable housing at the same time, “but we need to start a larger community conversation around growth planning” that integrates planning and zoning with other values and identified needs, such as affordable housing, land conservation and sustainability.

According to Keri, sustainability needs to include consideration of wildlife habitat, migration corridors, habitat for sensitive species, water resources, river health, preservation of wetlands, groundwater and aquifer replenishment, preservation of agricultural land, open spaces, and public access to all these resources. The Land Trust hopes to keep these aspects of sustainability in the forefront of future community conversations about housing.



“You can try to limit growth, but it’s going somewhere,” says Clegg.

The Land Trust sees this as an opportunity to influence how and where that growth goes to benefit the people and the environment. For those who think this is outside the Land Trust’s wheelhouse, Keri reminds us that the land trust movement came about in the early 1980s to protect agricultural land and open space that was being bought up and turned into subdivisions and housing developments.

Despite the common belief that preservation and development are often on opposing sides, the Land Trust and the people who make our work possible, believe in a brighter future. This project represents a new path that moves away from siloed-thinking towards a way of thinking that emphasizes the connectivity of people with the surrounding environment, the climate, as well as our interconnectedness with each other.

“WE’VE ALWAYS BEEN IN THE BUSINESS OF THE TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE,” SAYS KERI. “ENVIRONMENT. ECONOMY. AND PEOPLE.”





THE QUEEN'S CROWN PROPERTY



A family's land is preserved for wildlife, for the community, and for generations to come.

The Queen's Crown Gateway Property is an exciting example of what is possible with the support of our community. Because of the property's scenic and habitat values, as well as its proximity to public lands, the property was a conservation priority for the Land Trust and other partners.

When the Hennefer family listed the property for sale last summer, Dennis Hennefer reached out to Keri York, Lands Program Director, about the potential to acquire it for conservation instead of it going to a private individual. "I didn't want to see my family's land developed," said Dennis. "I wanted to see it saved for future generations to enjoy like we have. For wildlife to continue to use it, for the community to continue to access public lands from it, and for it to provide a gateway to our home."

Because of support from people like you, we were able to act quickly on this opportunity to protect a truly special place.

A WILDLIFE REFUGE

The Queen's Crown Gateway Property is critical habitat, and provides a haven for all varieties of wildlife - from elk and mule deer, to Greater sage-grouse and other upland birds. The plant community consists of basin big sagebrush and bitterbrush, native grasses and forb understory, including Western yarrow, arrowleaf balsamroot, Hooker's balsamroot, lupine, desert parsley, and puccoon.

The springs and intermittent streams on the property provide important water resources for wildlife. Riparian vegetation consists of chokecherry, golden currant, and Baltic rush plant communities, which can provide areas for big game calving. The Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game reports observation of Canada lynx, a threatened species, as well as gray wolf activity.

The Queen's Crown Gateway Property provides habitat for elk and mule deer year-round and summer habitat for pronghorn antelope. This property is also within a migration corridor

for mule deer and pronghorn antelope moving from high elevation summer habitats to low elevation winter habitat. Conserving pronghorn, mule deer, and elk winter ranges and migration habitat across jurisdictions will help promote the overall ecological integrity of terrestrial landscapes in the West.

FOR ALL TOMORROWS

With land selling at an alarming rate in the Wood River Valley and surrounding areas, there was urgency in protecting this property. The protection of this property will ensure access to adjacent public lands for recreation.

It will also help reduce sprawl that can impact the wildlife that depends on properties like this. While most of this property is within the hillside overlay district and not developable, there are approximately 6 acres that could have potentially been subdivided and developed, which would have been contrary to smart growth principles, given the lack of nearby infrastructure, utilities, or other residential development.

Encouraging growth closer to the town of Carey reduces infrastructure costs and challenges for wildlife and humans that come with developing at the wildland-urban interface.

“I’m pleased we were able to act quickly to protect this important property. Some of these opportunities only come up once; when we can respond quickly we’re ensuring future generations can have access to these special places.”

Scott Boettger
Executive Director

”



Robert Hennefer, Carla Hennefer, Keri York, Mary Ann Hennefer, Dennis Hennefer

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www.woodriverlandtrust.org

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2022 EVENTS

For exact dates and times, please visit woodriverlandtrust.org or scan the QR code



MAY

MAY 2-5: IDAHO GIVES

Make a donation to the Land Trust to celebrate another year of connecting to the wild spaces & happy places in our Valley

MAY 4: RECOGNIZING REDDS

Come learn about the importance of and how to identify fish redds at our Draper Preserve before heading over to the river to scout the banks and participate in a redd count

MAY 11: THE BIG WOOD RIVER MOVIE

Join us for this exciting showing of the special Director's Cut of the Big Wood River movie at the Community Library

MAY 19: RECOGNIZING REDDS

Come learn about the importance of and how to identify fish redds at our Draper Preserve before heading over to the river to scout the banks and participate in a redd count

JUNE

JUNE 2: RECOGNIZING REDDS

Come learn about the importance of and how to identify fish redds at our Draper Preserve before heading over to the river to scout the banks and participate in a redd count

JUNE 4: SAGEBRUSH SATURDAY AT RINKER ROCK CREEK RANCH

Learn more about the research that the University of Idaho is doing out on the ranch

DIVING INTO DARK SKIES AT RINKER ROCK CREEK RANCH

Learn more about the beautiful dark skies that provide the thrilling backdrop to our Valley

JUNE 18: YOGA IN THE PRESERVES

Immerse in nature with Kelsey of Gather Studio at a morning yoga session held at our Simons/Bauer Preserve. The perfect way to welcome the upcoming Summer Solstice

JULY

JULY 16: YOGA IN THE PRESERVES

Immerse in nature with Gabby of Pure Body Bliss Studio at a morning yoga session held at our Colorado Gulch Preserve. Kick off your weekend with one of Gabby's creative movement sequences

MURALING AT THE COLORADO GULCH PRESERVE

Come watch muralist John Zender Estrada as he creates a mural depicting our Pollinator Meadow trail