

Wood River Land Trust

Winter/Spring 2014

Protecting the heart
of the valley...now
and for the future.

WOOD
RIVER
LAND
TRUST


20 years!



Scott Boettger
© Daphne Muehle

Celebrating our 20th Anniversary: A Look at the Past A Message from Scott Boettger, Executive Director

It is hard to believe but it is true, Wood River Land Trust (WRLT) is 20 years old this year. I am grateful to our founders for their inspiration and dedication to conservation. To start an organization with nothing is a daunting task, yet now—because they took action when it was needed and we have your continued annual support—we can celebrate tremendous success during the past two decades.

Our success comes in acres saved, waters restored and habitat protected. We strategically focus our resources on the places that need our help the most and will have the greatest benefit for our community. Additionally, we work to connect people in our area with the places they love the most, such as the Hailey Greenway, the Howard Preserve in Bellevue and the River Park at Sun Peak in Ketchum. I am proud of this history and the opportunity to make a positive impact on a place I love.

From here to there...will be the overall theme for our communications this year. From children to adults, the river to the highest peak, Challis to Shoshone, and the Lost River valley to the Camas Prairie, we work together to save the beauty, character and diversity of our landscapes for future generations to explore and enjoy as we do today.

Our three newsletters this year will focus on the past, present and future, one edition for each time frame:

- 2014 Edition #1: The Past, 1994 - 2009;
- 2014 Edition #2: The Present, 2010 - 2014; and
- 2014 Edition #3: The Future.

I hope you enjoy reading snippets from our old publications as we take a journey back in time. We use past written material to remember our humble beginnings and hope to end our 20th anniversary year announcing exciting protection efforts. We are in this together, holding true to values of conservation, connection to nature, public access, openness and integrity.

1994

Inspired by Nature



WRLT FOUNDING BOARD
from left to right, back row:
Henry Whiting, Shelly Shoemaker,
Mac Whiting, Mike Medberry,
Paul Todd (*deceased*);
middle row: Carol Brown, Molly
Goodyear, Pam Feld;
kneeling: Kent Pressman, Paul
Potters.

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful,
committed citizens can change the world;
indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.*

—Margaret Mead

A GROUP OF 10 PEOPLE living in the Wood River Valley saw a need for saving the beauty, character and diversity of the place they loved. What they did next has had lasting impacts on our area. Their inspiration, and that of Board members who followed, plus the vision of WRLT's only Executive Director, Scott Boettger, translated into more than 15,000 acres of protected lands and nearly two miles of restored river.

"It is truly amazing to see Wood River Land Trust's success blossom during the past 20 years. The reason 99% of us live or visit here is to enjoy our natural surroundings, which the Land Trust watches over for us all. Therefore, I encourage you to become a contributor to the Land Trust, leaving a legacy of protected landscapes for generations to enjoy as we do today."

—Carol Brown, WRLT co-founder and donor

Looking back at one of the first issues of our newsletter, we share excerpts from a message by Wendy Hosman, who was serving as Wood River Land Trust's President. We're pleased to say that Wendy and Greg Hosman are still annual donors of WRLT.

Centennial Marsh ©Larry Barnes



QUALITY OF LIFE. Isn't this why you love the Wood River Valley? Where sagebrush covered hills give way to rugged mountains dressed with evergreens and quaking aspen. Minutes from your door there are rainbow trout to catch, trails to explore, brilliantly colored wildflowers to photograph and powdered snow to imprint. Have you viewed anything as marvelous as the expanse of agricultural land in the Bellevue triangle or smelled anything as sweet as sagebrush after a late afternoon rainstorm? This is just a glimpse of what the Wood River Valley has to offer and what the Wood River Land Trust

works to protect.

Scott Boettger, Executive Director, and the Board of Directors are working to protect your quality of life in numerous ways. We are working with the Idaho Fish and Game to protect properties around Centennial Marsh. We are coordinating efforts between the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Mule Deer Foundation and Idaho Fish and Game to protect critical deer and elk migration corridors. We plan to improve recreational and scenic experience at Boxcar Bend, which the Land Trust owns, by completing river work necessary to maintain the integrity of the river

bank, improving river access and providing interpretive signage of the native flora. We continue to work with the Forest Service with land swaps between in-holdings and isolated properties owned by the Forest Service.

Currently, the Wood River Valley provides significant open space, recreation opportunities, scenic views, wildlife habitat and agriculture lands, but these values are being threatened on a daily basis. If these values are important to you, I encourage you to become a donor to Wood River Land Trust. I look forward to welcoming you to the organization.

1999

From 1997 through 1999, WRLT worked to conserve more than 1,000 acres of land near the Trail Creek summit. Below is a blurb from our newsletter in the late 90's describing the importance of the donated Twin Bridges conservation easements. Because of the generosity of a group of landowners, 12 separate lots were protected in perpetuity.

WITH THE COMPLETION of two more easements covering 160 acres, WRLT has now worked with nine different landowners to protect nearly all of this 1,360-acre in-holding just over the Trail Creek summit. The easements protect the water quality of Twin Bridges Creek, a major tributary of the Big Lost River, as well as important habitat for moose, migrating elk, deer and antelope.



2003

Caring for the land after it is protected is one of the basic functions of a land trust. WRLT takes seriously our role as guardian for our open space. As this piece from 2003 states, we established a Stewardship Endowment Fund to cover expenses associated with maintaining preserves and upholding the values of conservation easements.

In order to figure out how much to set-aside in the endowment for a property, we use a formula to extrapolate future stewardship costs of properties and expected return from the endowment. Ten years ago with just over 3,000 acres protected stewardship expenses were not as great as they are now. Today, we have protected nearly 15,000 acres. We are pleased to report that our Stewardship Endowment Fund is currently fully financed to ensure permanent protection of all our lands. Of course, with each new property we protect this required amount changes... but that's a good problem to have.



WRLT CREATES LANDMARK STEWARDSHIP ENDOWMENT FUND

Like most land trusts, WRLT funds easement monitoring and land management activities from its current operating budget. In addition, however, WRLT has committed to build an account that will generate income to pay for stewardship activities in perpetuity.

WRLT believes strongly that every conservation easement it accepts and every property it acquires in fee represents a significant responsibility. We have an obligation to our donors to ensure that the terms of the easements are upheld. We have a commitment to our donors to show respect for the

land we watch over and maintain. We have a duty to the Wood River community to keep our open space beautiful and healthy. The introduction of this fund is a testament to WRLT's planned and responsible approach to its partners.

It takes time and money to maintain land and easement terms. Income generated from the fund will ensure that we can monitor vegetation and wildlife habitats, and, as easement encumbered lands change hands, work with the new owners to guarantee that the conservation easement is respected.

We will encourage easement donors to contribute to the Fund to cover future costs of stewardship. For those protected properties

in which landowners are unable to contribute to the Stewardship Fund, we cover those contributions with gifts from our donors, supporting governmental agencies and other organizations. Our goal is to set aside \$400,000 to generate sufficient income to provide funds to permanently steward the 3,364 acres WRLT already protects.

"I'm pleased to report that we just made an initial allocation of \$100,000 to the Stewardship Endowment Fund. Furthermore, we will see that additional contributions are made for each piece of land that comes under our protection in the future," said Jim Marron, President of WRLT.

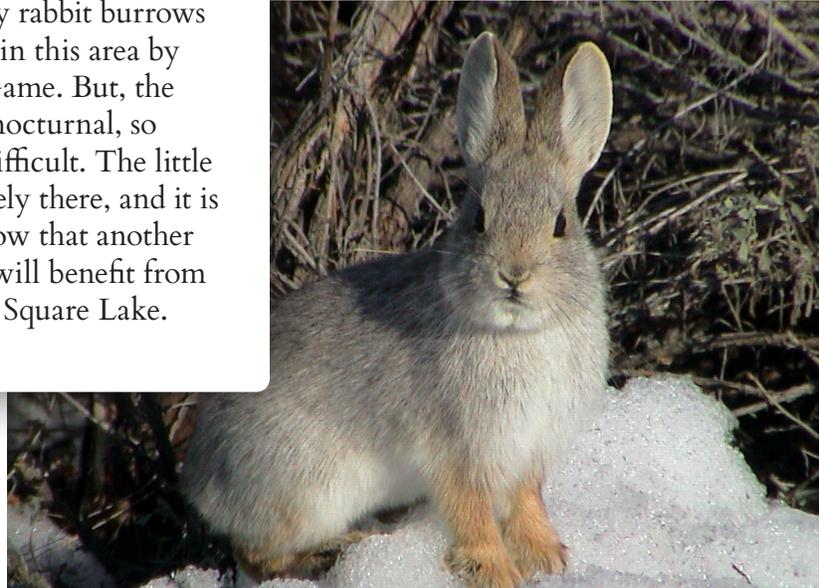
In 2005 we announced the protection of Square Lake, a 320-acre property located 15 miles south of Bellevue. The landowner, Dan Brown, wanted to preserve this property as part of his family's legacy and sold to WRLT at a bargain sale, providing tax savings for him and a deal for WRLT. Square Lake abuts protected public lands and contains important habitat for sage grouse and 28 acres of wetland habitat. Another species that calls this land home was featured in our newsletter from that year.

A LITTLE PROFILE

In the process of protecting Square Lake, the Land Trust discovered that the property may well support another inhabitant. The pygmy rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*) is easy to overlook, primarily because of its size (small enough to fit in a cereal bowl), but also because there are so few of them—it is an Idaho species of concern and federal agencies list it as “sensitive.” The rabbit is found in dry sagebrush country of the Great Basin and is dependent on sagebrush for food and protection.

The decline in pygmy rabbit populations (in Washington, the species is near extinction) is primarily due to habitat loss and fragmentation through development and agricultural practices.

Active pygmy rabbit burrows have been found in this area by Idaho Fish and Game. But, the pygmy rabbit is nocturnal, so spotting one is difficult. The little rabbit is most likely there, and it is rewarding to know that another sensitive species will benefit from the protection of Square Lake.



Pygmy Rabbit images © Jim Witham

Square Lake is a good example of our need for having funds on-hand in order to accomplish our conservation goals. We are strategic about how we spend your investment, leveraging public funding where possible so that your private dollars can protect lands which do not qualify for or meet public funding criteria.

In 2013, just eight years later, WRLT leveraged Square Lake to protect additional lands in a transfer deal with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the City of Ketchum. BLM now owns and manages Square Lake for the public.



FUNDRAISING FOR SQUARE LAKE

A few years ago, thanks to forward-looking supporters, Wood River Land Trust was able to fund an Open Space Investment Account. Because we had those funds on hand, we were able to move quickly to protect Square Lake. Now, we must replenish that account so that we are prepared for a similar opportunity in the future. Your tax-deductible donation to the Open Space Investment Account will ensure that the Land Trust is prepared to act when the need arises. Thank you!

Square Lake, 2013 © Laura Speck

2006

Trout Friendly LAWN

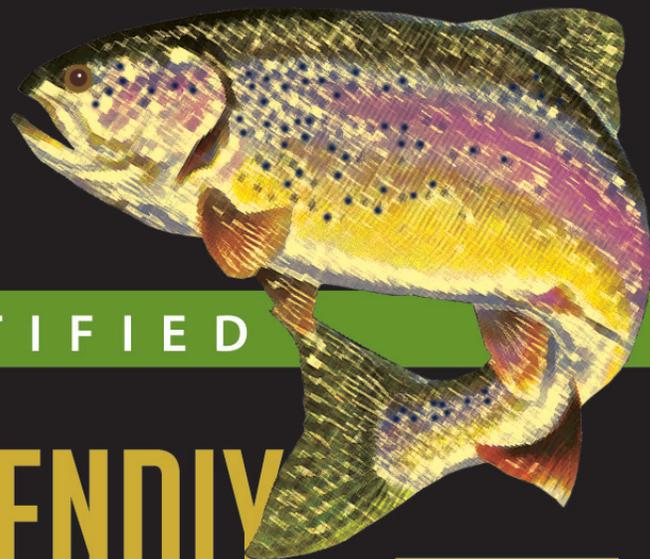
Then...2007



TROUT FRIENDLY LAWNS IS AN EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN:

WOOD
RIVER

CLEMENS
ASSOCIATES

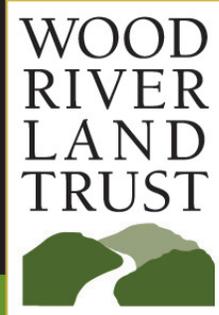


CERTIFIED

Now...2014

TROUT FRIENDLY

- CONSERVES WATER
- INCLUDES NATIVE PLANTS
- REDUCES PESTICIDES



info at: woodriverlandtrust.org

Our Trout Friendly program has expanded since it was first launched in 2006. Today, the program is called Trout Friendly rather than Trout Friendly Lawn, as we want to promote native habitats and not just lawn care. We now have 161 properties which proudly display our conservation signs in their yards and practice the three tenets of the program: use less water, reduce or eliminate synthetic fertilizers and herbicides, and plant native and drought-tolerant species.

To register your yard as Trout Friendly, talk with your landscaper, check out our website or contact Patti Lousen, Project Coordinator, for more information. If your landscaper isn't familiar with the program, encourage them to contact us.

Below is an excerpt from our 2009 newsletter when the program was just three years old.

TROUT FRIENDLY LAWN SERIES IS GOLD

This summer green signs sporting images of trout are sprouting up in lawns throughout the Wood River Valley, as the Land Trust's Trout Friendly lawn program enters its third year. For 2009, the program has three different levels of certification including basic, silver and gold. At the highest level, a gold

standard Trout Friendly environment completely eliminates the use of synthetic fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides.

Over 60 businesses, homeowners and parks have now joined the program to protect the health of the Big Wood River and the communities relying on it. Our steadily growing partnership illustrates the local support for healthy landscape practices.

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Wood River Land Trust protects and restores land, water, and wildlife habitat in the Wood River Valley and its surrounding areas.

We work cooperatively with private landowners and local communities to ensure these areas are protected now and for future generations.



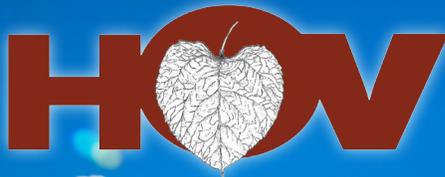
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Heart of the Valley

Illustrate how the Wood River Valley inspires you by entering our Heart of the Valley photography, prose and poetry contest.

Submissions due by May 12, 2014.
For more information visit our website:
www.HeartoftheValley.net.



2013 Entry by Josh Fields