Dear Friends:

I so enjoy putting together our Annual Report and looking back on what we accomplished—together—over the past 12 months. This year, it is also bittersweet for me as this will be the final Annual Report I share as the Executive Director. But what a note on which to depart! Fiscal Year 2019 was spectacular. I am so profoundly grateful to our community and its commitment to this place.

You are the foundation upon which GVLT stands, and I hope as you read through our Annual Report, you too are filled with a sense of pride and gratitude. Without your friendship, your generous financial support, your volunteer time and your visits to the office to say hello and cheer us on, we wouldn’t have accomplished as much as we did, or had as much fun. Thank you.

When reflecting on my nearly 10 years at GVLT, I’m astonished at how we’ve grown together. We’ve grown our budget by almost 300%, increased our professional staff from 7 to 11, conserved nearly 12,000 acres, and completed more than 15 trail connection and improvement projects.

Earlier in 2019, the staff and Board spent several days creating GVLT’s new Strategic Plan, one that will take us boldly into the future and help us navigate the growth in our valley and seize the opportunities it brings. I’m excited for you to see what we have in store.

On behalf of all of us at GVLT, thank you for being a part of our family.

Warmly,
Penelope Pierce

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Dear Supporters,

I echo Penelope’s gratitude for you, the people who make the work reflected in this Annual Report possible. As you will read in the following pages, it has been yet another hallmark year for the Gallatin Valley Land Trust. I am honored to have served at the helm of the Board of Directors through the creation of a new Strategic Plan; a vision for what I believe will be the most impactful and inspiring chapter of GVLT’s history.

Much of our success over the last 10 years can be attributed to strong and effective leadership from Penelope, our Executive Director. With her vision and guidance, GVLT has thrived and scaled to meet the needs of our growing community. Saying she will be missed is such an understatement. Her legacy will carry forward for many years to come and I am filled with optimism about the next GVLT chapter.

We are poised and ready to do more—to conserve more land, build more trails, and connect with more people who, like you, care deeply about this place we call home. It is the intent and goal of the Board of Directors to not only provide a seamless leadership transition, but to stay focused on the future. Today, as GVLT builds on the foundation created with its strong supporters, we push forward with our mission to protect the last best place—forever.

Mark Kehke

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

FROM THE CHAIRMAN
The Gallatin Valley is growing at an annual rate of 4%, that’s 4,000 people moving here each year. Our growing community is putting pressure on open landscapes, critical wildlife habitat, and shared outdoor spaces. GVLT’s work to conserve open land and build trails has become more important, and more challenging, than ever. In the face of these challenges, the GVLT Board of Directors and staff have crafted a new strategic plan to guide us through the next three years. Through this process we assessed our strengths, our community’s most pressing needs, our most effective tools, and our capacity to do more. We dreamed big and created a vision that is both aspirational and focused. This work couldn’t wait. As you’ll see in these pages, we’ve already begun.

As we reflect on almost 30 years of achievement and embark on our next three-year strategic plan, we remain committed to lands & trails. Our focus for the next three years will be to accelerate land conservation in our region, build trails that further enhance our community, serve as a trusted advocate for land conservation and trails and build support and community through our outreach efforts.

OUR GOALS:

- Working within our geographic focus areas, complete high quality & enduring LAND CONSERVATION projects that provide significant community benefit.
- Ensure appropriate CONSERVATION easement STEWARDSHIP & compliance by maintaining, enhancing, & protecting conservation values.
- DEVELOP new conservation and trail building FINANCE TOOLS.
- ADVOCATE for LAND conservation tools & the importance of connected TRAILS in land use planning processes.
- Maintain & STEWARD community TRAILS.
- BUILD more high quality, accessible, connected TRAILS.
- STRENGTHEN strategic trail PARTNERSHIPS.
- BUILD an inclusive COMMUNITY of informed, engaged, & caring individuals who will steward & respect our open lands and trails.

STRATEGIC PLAN

INTRODUCTION
We completed four new easements in 2019 and added an additional Project Manager, Chad Klinkenborg, to the team to accelerate the pace of land conservation.

To diversify our conservation tools, we began pursuing the purchase of two unique properties that meet both conservation and recreation priorities as part of a new, integrated project model.

GVLT HAS COMPLETED 15 CONSERVATION EASEMENTS IN THE AMSTERDAM/CHURCHILL AREA PROTECTING OVER 6,500 TOTAL ACRES

Our stewardship staff monitors each of our 109 easements on 48,086 acres annually to ensure compliance and support landowners in protecting and enhancing the conservation values of their properties.

This year, the GVLT stewardship staff partnered with Gallatin Valley Botanical, the owners of conserved Rocky Creek Farm, on a streambank and floodplain enhancement project to restore the historical function of Rocky Creek. The restored streambank and new vegetation will protect the stream from erosion and excess sediment, resulting in clearer and cooler water for fish and improved habitat for wildlife.

We supported the landowner’s efforts with funding from our Stewardship Enhancement Fund and the Landscape Scale Restoration grant from the DNRC.

Renewed reaccreditation with the Land Trust Accreditation Commission: GVLT continues to be a national leader within the land trust community and through the accreditation process. We were one of the first land trusts to be accredited in 2008 and received our second reaccreditation in 2019.
In 2015, GVLT and 17 partners were awarded $3.8 million from the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCCP), a fund from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), to directly fund conservation easements and complete stewardship projects in the Gallatin Valley. As of this year, we have fully allocated those dollars to exceptional projects, and GVLT and partners have applied to renew the allocation to invest further in conservation easements within the focus area.

In 2018, GVLT led a successful voter campaign to renew funding for the Gallatin County Open Lands Program, securing over $1 million annually for conservation easements. In that first year, GVLT has used the funding to conserve over 1,000 acres and received commitments for three additional projects. These local dollars are being matched with funds from the NRCS. The easements will protect prime farmland in our conservation focus areas with three longtime farming families.

Since 2015, GVLT has utilized $3.8 million in RCCP funding to complete 6 stewardship projects and create 7 new easements totaling 2,602 acres.
The growth of our valley has spurred local governments to reimagine and update various land use plans. We’ve engaged in these public processes, advocating for the importance of connected trails and open land as our community develops. We have served as a resource, highlighting the most critical needs for recreation and transportation, and the significant natural resources that should be considered and preserved. Having a seat at the table is important so that we’re making careful and thoughtful choices when we decide how and where we grow.

The Gallatin Regional Park once felt far away. Now it is surrounded by neighborhoods. Our partnership with local governments ensures that critical planning for trail connectivity and land conservation is happening alongside growth.

Our work doesn’t stop at building trails. We think long term about the sustainability of trails and building a sense of shared responsibility for their future upkeep. Each year we tackle projects that improve trail experiences. This year we:

- Hired a trails contractor with specialized machinery and worked with volunteers to make critical trail improvements to address eroding switchbacks and drainage issues at Drinking Horse and Triple Tree Trails
- Worked with 39 business and organization volunteer groups to give teams the opportunity to connect — and give back — outside of the office
- Installed a bike rack at the base of Peets Hill
- Installed 7 benches and updated maps in a portion of our 34 trail kiosks around town
- Trained and empowered Trail Ambassadors and community members on trail etiquette
- Supported weed management practices with volunteer groups
GVLT continues to connect Main Street to the Mountains, north and south.

**PATH TO THE ‘M’ & DRINKING HORSE:**
In 2013, GVLT rallied partners and was successful in receiving a $3.4 million grant from the Federal Lands Access Program to build a shared use path from town to the College ‘M’ and Drinking Horse Trails, two of Bozeman’s most popular recreation destinations. The funds were matched with $675,000 from the Trails, Open Space and Parks Bond which Bozeman voters approved in 2012. The 2.1 mile path was completed this fall and provides a safe route for pedestrians, bicyclists and runners to access these popular trailheads and reduce congestion in the parking lots.

**STORY MILL COMMUNITY PARK CONNECTOR:**
This year, we built a trail connecting the new Story Mill Community Park to Bond Street and the Gallatin Valley Food Bank.

**PAINTED HILLS CONNECTION:**
The Painted Hills Connector Trail opened last fall, the final link in the Main Street to the Mountains vision to the south. After years of perseverance, we secured the final easements to cross private and state land to complete the connection. Since the opening, we’ve been putting the final touches on the trail including installing signage, planting vegetation, and naturalizing the trail.

The Painted Hills Connector Trail completed the Main Street to the Mountains vision to the south.
Over 400 adults and children joined 45 free guided trail walks in the Discovery Walks series.

The NextGen Advisory Board gathered with friends for their first annual fundraiser in Lindley Park, Pop-Up Picnic.

We welcomed the community on conserved land in Kelly Canyon to learn about beavers as part of our annual Conservation Bus Tour.

We hosted our most successful bi-annual Evening on the Land on a conserved property in the Reese Creek Area.

We are proud to build community and connect people to place through gatherings with supporters, the public, our NextGen Advisory Board, and our partners. More than just entertaining our community, these events help instill a sense of shared ownership and promote stewardship. Events in 2019 included: Pop-Up Picnic, Discovery Walks, Conservation Easement Tour, Evening on the Land, Open and Local, and the Pedal Parade.

STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships have always been at the core of our work. This year we continued to think outside of the box to engage with new audiences and bring awareness to the many benefits of trails.

TRAILS AS WELLNESS: We are part of a coalition of health organizations promoting physical activity and nutrition to combat obesity rates in Gallatin County. This year’s National Trails Day was in partnership with Bozeman Health at the Highland Glen Nature Preserve.

We continue to offer our TrailRx program to medical providers so they can prescribe trails to their patients struggling with obesity, mental health challenges, heart disease and more.

TRAILS FOR EVERYONE: Trails are a great equalizer, providing recreational opportunities to all. There is a growing Hispanic population in our valley so we translated our trail maps into Spanish so they could feel comfortable navigating our local trails.

Hundreds of community volunteers hit the trails to improve the Highland Glen Nature Preserve, a trail system GVLT maintains in partnership with Bozeman Health.

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We have learned from experience that working together is what matters most. Our diverse partnerships are critical to the success of our mission. Thank you to all our partners.

GET TO KNOW OUR BOARD

GET TO KNOW OUR TEAM
The Montana Community Foundation manages an additional endowment of $194,855 on behalf of GVLT.
Thank you for your generous support.

DONORS

$25,000+:
Anonymous • Cross Charitable Foundation • Kendeda Fund • Montana Lateiner

$10,000 - $24,999:
Cindy Collyer • Dorothy Ballantyne • The Cinnabar Foundation • Henry & Kathryn Hood Harjes Foundation • Margaret & Gary

$500 to $999:
Anonymous  • 360 Pet Medical  • American Land Title Company  • Laura

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Anonymous  • 360 Pet Medical  • American Land Title Company  • Laura
The following landowners donated significant land value by creating a conservation easement and/or contributed to the GVL T Stewardship Fund to protect their conservation easement in perpetuity.

- Alice Meister & George Baskin
- Renee & Will Gavin
- Nancy & Rick Barber
- Mary & Alan Brutger
- Susan & Andrew Dana
- Tim Dabney
- Charles Dede
- Ryan Edie & Gene Renner
- Beverley Diamond & Edwin Hettinger
- Thomas & Steve Liebmann
- Lillian & Richard Lund
- Maryanne Mott
- Lisa & Bob Shadiow
- Pat & David Steinmuller
- Lori Stocker & Dan Storm
- Jennifer & Richard Smith
- Linda & Mike Sullivan
- Patti & David Steinmuller
- Cat Stinson
- Mark Story
- Nancy & Tim Swanson
- Joel & Tad Tibbets
- Carol & Dean Tyler
- Russ & Lisa Tuckerman
- Sharon Tudor Isler
- Patricia Simmons & Ed Verry
- Julie Videen
- Kathy & Curt Vogel
- Jan & Ollie Ward
- Dan Ward
- Valerie & Jim Walter
- Cathy & Norm Wessen
- Gail Wellington
- Phyllis & Mike Wells
- Sue & John Wenzel
- Julie & Ken Younger
- Marguerite & Les Reeves
- Doris Ward
- Sue & John Mills
- Jodi & Ray Rasker
- Dede & Carson Ober
- Sue & John Talbot
- Pete & Lisa Shadlow
- Lisa & Rob Pertzborn
- Lisa & Keith Reed
- Patricia & Don Reeder
- John & Mary Robbins
- Betty & Dorick Sauvageau
- Karen Schmidt & A Barbett Spotsky
- Sharon Sudan
- Tim Dabney
- Louisa Duvall
- Charles Dede
- Ryan Edie & Gene Renner
- Beverley Diamond & Edwin Hettinger
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- Sue & John Wenzel
- Julie & Ken Younger
- Marguerite & Les Reeves

GVEF recognizes the voice and contributions of those individuals who have either donated to GVEF in 2022 or contribute, and have included in their estate plans.

- Stephanie Alexander
- Donna Anderson
- Dorothy Ballantyne
- Anne Banks
- Betsy Barton
- John Banta
- Norma Baskin
- Betty & Dorick Sauvageau
- Karen Schmidt & A Barbett Spotsky
- Sharon Sudan
- Tim Dabney
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