FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear GVLT Supporter,

I find it hard to believe that a whole year has passed since I joined the Gallatin Valley Land Trust (GVLT). They say that time flies when you are busy; perhaps pandemic, drought, smoke and heat make time pass even faster. This crazy year has certainly shown me (and likely many of you) the true value of GVLT’s mission. Despite all the difficulties that have faced our community, our staff and board have exceeded all my expectations. The accompanying pages show how we grew our capacity, accelerated our conservation efforts, and accommodated a near doubling of use on our trails. During my first full year as Executive Director I have had the pleasure of meeting many of you and hearing about your passion for the mission of GVLT. Thank you for sharing your love of this place and investing in its future. I look forward to more of those conversations as I continue to deepen my understanding of the GVLT family and this community. Your insights and perspectives will be especially helpful as we envision a strategic plan that will carry us through the next 5 years. My door is always open.

Thank you. We are humbled and fortunate to have your support.

Chet Work

FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

Dear Friends of GVLT,

In the last 13 years I’ve been involved with GVLT, I’ve seen our capacity as an organization grow. In the same time I’ve seen increasing pressure to “do something” and “do more” about the growth we’re seeing in our region. The constant in all this has been the unwavering commitment from people like you to keep the Gallatin Valley an amazing place to live, work, and recreate. The time and effort involved to protect 50,000 acres, work behind the scenes to connect our communities with trails, and partner with diverse interests to protect what we all love is nothing short of amazing. Through a pandemic this incredible organization kept showing up (virtually) and didn’t miss a beat on delivering our mission. This year we managed to conserve over 1,200 acres of open land, lead trails planning efforts, complete critical trail connections all over town, and begin work on securing the last 12 acres on Peets Hill. I’m honored and humbled to work with such an incredible group of people.

Now is not the time for us to rest on our past successes. Our mission is more critical now than ever as we see continued growth in our area. This annual report showcases the impact we can have together and I hope that we’ve earned your support into the future. We have much more work to do! I am truly grateful to be involved in this organization.

Thank you,

Bill Cochran
Change and growth. It is all around us in the Gallatin Valley. And in many ways, it reflects the past year of GVLT. Our new Executive Director has settled into his role after joining a fully remote team. Our staff grew to accelerate the pace of our trails and conservation work. Yet in our community and within our organization, we are grounded by the constants we hold on to when things feel a little out of control: the landscapes we’ve conserved and the trails we’ve built. In a growing community, our work ensures that what makes this place so special stays the same. Forever. Thanks to you, our dedicated supporters, GVLT remains committed to our mission, and that is beacon of hope in changing world.
This year, Gallatin Valley Land Trust reached a major milestone: 50,000 total acres conserved.

In FY21 alone we conserved over 1,200 acres in our strategic focus areas and we’ve secured the necessary funding to protect an additional 1,700+ acres in FY22.

- 62 ACRES along the East Gallatin River conserved with the Vignes family, resulting in 186 CONTIGUOUS ACRES of riverfront protected habitat
- 160 ACRES acquired by GVLT in 2020 were transferred to the USFS in 2021, expanding public land and protecting access & wildlife habitat, Middle Cottonwood Canyon
- 229 ACRES of native grasslands on the Madison River Plateau, Harris Ranch
- 426 ACRES of rich farmland in Amsterdam/Churchill, Flikkema Homeplace
- 395 ACRES of farmland contributing to a large block of protected agricultural land in Amsterdam/Churchill, Bruce Visser Farm
- 305 ACRES of open space & prime soils east of quickly developing Gallatin Gateway, Bos Hay & Grain
- 12 ACRES adjacent to public land were purchased by GVLT to improve recreational access & protect wildlife habitat, Bear Canyon
- 520 ACRES of scenic farmland adjacent to land previously conserved in Gooch Hill, Leep-Pasha Farm

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Our trails and conservation programs often pursue projects separately, but we challenged ourselves to identify projects that enhance public access through both conservation and trails.

Last year, we purchased 160 acres of critical habitat that includes the Middle Cottonwood Trail. The subsequent transfer of that property to the USFS this summer expanded public land and ensured access in the Custer-Gallatin National Forest. Last winter, a generous landowner presented us with a similar opportunity — 18 acres at the mouth of Bear Canyon.

This scenic property is home to iconic wildlife and situated adjacent to 6,500 acres of State of Montana public lands. We are examining the potential for both recreation and conservation in this landscape by studying the wildlife presence and patterns, listening to partners, assessing the impacts of existing recreation and exploring recreation management solutions that will expand public access while protecting habitat.
It’s no surprise that our neighbors to the east in Paradise Valley are feeling the pressures of growth, as well. While GVLT has long held conservation easements in the Paradise Valley, our conservation tools are seeing renewed interest from landowners, partners and residents. We are grateful to our partners at AMB West Philanthropies who have generously provided a multi-year grant to fund staff capacity for increased outreach to landowners in the Paradise Valley. AMB West Philanthropies has also offered funding to support the transaction costs associated with conservation easements, removing a significant barrier for landowners. Over the next few years GVLT will work with landowners to increase the pace of our work here at the gateway to Yellowstone and one of Montana’s most scenic valleys.

The Legacy Ranch conserved 590 acres of Yellowstone riverfrontage in the Paradise Valley in 2009.

The Triangle Trail Plan used community input to propose routes for a connected trail system that will grow with our valley.

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30 years ago our founder, Chris Boyd, envisioned a connected trail system that took people from Main Street to the Mountains. We’re taking his forward-thinking vision west, to the rapidly developing Triangle Area between Bozeman, Four Corners and Belgrade. We know from experience that the most efficient and cost-effective time to connect trails is before development occurs. For the last year we’ve been working with Gallatin County to create and fund a trail planning process that will guide future trail development. With nearly 2,000 engagements from the public, the steering committee crafted an inspirational and attainable vision for a connected trail system in the Triangle Area. The proposed routes — along with recommendations for regulations, policies, standards, and financing for construction and maintenance — will advance to the Gallatin County Commission, Belgrade City Council and Bozeman City Commission for adoption this fall.
We ensured safe, equitable trail access with the completion of two critical new connections.

For almost a decade, there has been a link missing from the Highland Glen Nature Preserve to the Gallatin Mental Health Center campus. This year, we partnered with Bozeman Health to ensure patients and neighbors have access to nature’s medicine through a half-mile trail that connects to over 90 miles in the Main Street to the Mountains Trail system.

We also patched a critical gap along Front Street creating a safe route for pedestrians and cyclists traveling northeast from Oak Street to the Story Mill Spur Trail, Story Mill Park, Path to the M, Drinking Horse and beyond. Small but mighty, this connector brings residents from Bozeman’s west side safely into downtown’s Main Street to the Mountains trails. The Front Street Pathway was funded in part by the City’s Trails, Open Space and Parks Bond.

From fixing gates and pulling weeds, to installing boardwalks and replacing wayfinding signs, GVLT takes our role as trail stewards very seriously. While many of our trail projects transfer to public land managers for long-term maintenance, we do retain formal responsibilities on several popular routes. Led by our MCC AmeriCorps Service Members, hundreds of volunteers ensure our trails are in tip-top shape. This summer we improved trails in Highland Glen Nature Preserve (a partnership with Bozeman Health), Triple Tree, Tuckerman Park, Sourdough Creek and Painted Hills. Our behind-the-scenes investment in the community trails is critical to ensuring our outdoor spaces are welcoming and safe for all to enjoy.
A good trail system is not measured in miles, but by the community of people who use and care for it. Challenges around trail etiquette escalated over the last year. To address concerns and promote kindness in the outdoors, GVLT partnered with One Montana and other outdoor recreation groups to form a collaborative response called Outside Kind. Under this umbrella, the Hike Kind, Ride Kind, Wag Kind, Ski Kind and Hunt Kind campaigns share a coordinated and consistent message about appropriate and considerate outdoor behaviors. Be kind to the trail and the land, be kind to your fellow trail users, and be kind to the landowners and critters who live nearby. Our pilot program launched in the summer of 2021 and a more comprehensive campaign will be shared later this year.

Temporary signs with messages about trail etiquette are rotated around popular trails. Take the Outside Kind Pledge and Quiz at OutsideKind.org.
While this report is focused on our activities during our fiscal year ending in June 2021, we just couldn’t leave out a recent exciting opportunity. In July, 12 acres at the south end of Peets Hill were listed for sale. Thanks to our loyal supporters and our Opportunity Fund, we were able to submit an offer swiftly. Despite competing offers from developers, GVLT secured a contract on the property and we have completed our portion of fundraising to close the deal in January 2022. This parcel will expand the park by 30% and we couldn’t be happier to partner with the City of Bozeman to protect the final piece of Bozeman’s most iconic park.
The Montana Community Foundation manages an additional endowment of $249,524 on behalf of GVLT.

*The Stewardship Fund is an endowed fund that supports the annual monitoring and legal defense of our perpetual conservation easements.

**Land temporarily held for conservation or public access

*GVLT secured an additional $3,259,500 from public funding sources on behalf of landowners to fund conservation easements. Landowners also donated $4,555,970 in conservation easement value in FY21. These significant sources of funding for our conservation work are not reflected in our revenue because they never pass through GVLT. GVLT’s general and stewardship endowments grew significantly this fiscal year due to a strong market performance, however these funds are invested for long term use and do not reflect available operating cash.

The total assets of FY21 are $9,089,839.
Thank you for your generous support.

This list includes donations made during Fiscal Year 2021 (7/1/20 through 6/30/21). Donations made after July 1, 2021 will be appear in next year’s report.

Thank you for your generous support.
These landowners donated significant land value through conservation projects and/or contributed to the GVL T Stewardship Fund to protect their conservation easement in perpetuity.

Donors

Diamond & Edwin Hettinger

Anker

Stephanie Alexander

Christopher Bulger

If you would like to speak to someone about planned giving, please call Development Director, Justin Barth at 406-587-8404 ext. 102.

GVL T recognizes the vision and commitment of those individuals who have either donated to GVL T for over 20 years, or have included GVL T in their estate plan.

Lieberman

Paul Gaffney & Richard Gillette

Gaffney & Jim Hamilton

Dabney Dubitzky

Emily DeLuca

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