Dear Friends and Supporters of GVLT,

Last year at this time, we were sharing our new five-year strategic plan—the culmination of a year-long collaborative effort between our Board of Directors, staff, and NextGen Advisory Board. Within that plan, you may recall we were very clear—“We do not need to change what we do, we just need to do more of it.” Our resulting goals and long-range vision are ambitious.

As I reflect on our first year of work toward that vision, I feel deep gratitude and admiration for the way we dove headfirst into this effort and worked tirelessly to accelerate our pace and advance our mission of “Trails and Conservation.”

In the following pages, you’ll learn about some remarkable achievements from the past year, including the establishment of an additional 13,309 acres in conservation easements and the continued expansion and improvement of the Main Street to the Mountains trail system. None of these accomplishments would have been possible without your unwavering support.

As we look to the future, there is still much work to be done. We are optimistic about both the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead and invite you to continue to be a part of this incredible journey.

Thank you for being part of the GVLT family!

With warm regards,

Chet Work
GVLT Executive Director

Dear Friends,

I chuckle now when I think of how I didn’t fully understand GVLT’s “Trails and Conservation” mission when my husband and I first started supporting GVLT many years ago. I certainly valued the trails then, when my toddler daughter took an hour to walk a mile as she squatted down to investigate every rock, bug, and stream in her path. (She walks a lot faster now and still carries rocks in her backpack.) However, I came to GVLT with a passion for land conservation and did not fully grasp the connection between trails and conservation in those early days. I do now!

As stated in our 2023-28 Strategic Plan, GVLT envisions “a future where conserved open space and trails ensure that all species and all people in our community can thrive.” That is what GVLT is all about—enhancing the human and natural health of our community. Health takes many forms, and GVLT is of course one of multiple organizations in the region that play a vital role in this effort. GVLT’s part is to ensure that all members of our community can benefit from the natural environment—not only its beauty and wildlife, but also the productive agricultural fields, clean air and water, and proven health advantages of time outdoors on the trail.

The GVLT Board and staff deeply appreciate your participation in our efforts to create a healthy and vibrant community. We are determined to keep pace with the rapid development in our area and thank you for being an indispensable part of this rewarding work.

With gratitude,

Susan Dana
GVLT Board Chair
At GVLT, our mission to protect open space and create trails requires that we take the “long view.” That’s why our Fiscal Year 2023-28 Strategic Plan is grounded in a longer-term 30-year vision of a future where conserved open space and trails ensure that all species and all people in our community can thrive. Launched a year ago, this plan provides a detailed roadmap to show where GVLT has come from and where we are going. With our feet firmly on the gas pedal, we’re working at an accelerated pace to reach our destination.

The Spring Family Farm easement, completed in 2020, conserves 313 acres of open land in GVLT’s East Gallatin River strategic focus area.

LOOKING AHEAD

OUR FY23 - FY28 STRATEGIC GOALS:

Triple our pace of conservation by conserving 25,000 acres in the next five years—prioritizing projects that contain critical wildlife habitat, productive farmland, water, historical and cultural significance, climate resiliency benefits, and/or public access.

Deepen our commitment to conservation in Park County by adding an additional staff member to support the community.

Expand the Main Street to the Mountains trail system by completing 12 critical trail connections within the urban core of our community.

Thoughtfully and proactively expand the footprint of the trail network as the city grows south and toward Belgrade and Four Corners.

Connect our neighbors to the outdoors through pathways to public lands and expanded access to nature in the Bridger and Gallatin Mountains.

Ensure the long-term health of our trails through maintenance, investment in the Trail Ambassador program, and education around trail etiquette.

Invest in our people and grow our team to reflect the diversity of our community and accelerate the pace of our work.

Ensure our projects are open and welcoming to all.

First-Year Progress:

Conserved 13,309 acres

Hired a Conservation Program Manager for Park County & conserved 8,800-acre Paradise Valley Ranch

Completed Homestead Connector in Highland Glen Nature Preserve

Reviewed new developments for compliance with Triangle Trails Plan

Improved Drinking Horse Mountain Trail & grew Trail Ambassador & Outside Kind programs

Installed two new scenic overlooks & improved trails at Peets Hill to increase accessibility
Feedback incorporated! Based on community input, phase one improvements to Peets Hill included adding two new overlooks and extending the Chris Boyd Memorial Trail that winds down to Church Avenue.

The second phase of Peets Hill improvements is currently underway and will include the installation of a Medicine Wheel and Mountain Range Finder and improvements to the walking loop surrounding the Medicine Wheel to invite more people of all abilities into this space. The 12-acre addition at the southern end of Peets Hill and all improvements were made possible by the community’s generous support and ongoing commitment to this beloved park.

TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

The new Medicine Wheel and Mountain Range Finder are designed to connect people to place—helping us deepen our understanding of the landscape through history and geography.

The new upper overlook and trail to access it are handicap accessible so all can enjoy the beautiful view.
Did you know Drinking Horse Mountain Trail receives 150 visits a day in the winter and 500 per day in the summer? 2023 trail improvements have included establishing drainage features to prevent future rutting and erosion, reworking switchbacks for a safer and more sustainable trail, rebuilding bench pads for increased usability and durability, and adding two new kiosks. Thanks to the 67 volunteers who contributed to this much-needed refresh throughout the summer.

At GVLT, we love our volunteers! Thanks to all of you who show up—rain or shine—to get dirty, sweat, and have a ton of fun. To kick off the summer, GVLT partnered with the US Forest Service and the City of Bozeman to host National Trails Day on Drinking Horse, the “M” trails, and the Pathway to the M. Forty-three volunteers spent a rainy June morning helping pull weeds, maintain drains, brush the trail corridor, restore trail tread, and collect trash. Our all-star volunteers kept this momentum all summer, helping maintain 16 miles of our four signature trails: Drinking Horse, Highland Glen Nature Preserve, Painted Hills, and Triple Tree.

In addition to individual volunteers, GVLT relies on volunteer groups from businesses, organizations, and clubs to help keep our trails in tip-top shape. Trail maintenance is typically seasonal with scheduled group trail projects from May through October.

Opened in 2008, the Drinking Horse Mountain Trail sits on property owned by the US Fish & Wildlife Service and US Forest Service. The trail is maintained by GVLT, who helped facilitate the property donation and worked with partners, donors, and the community to permit, design, fund, and construct the trail.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOLUNTEER IMPACT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This summer:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>695 volunteers gave 1,905 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>251 youth volunteers gave 589 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 forty-two-gallon bags of dog poop &amp; trash collected</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 truckloads of invasive weeds pulled</td>
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<tr>
<td>300 trail drainage features maintained</td>
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<td>Countless branches lopped</td>
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In addition to individual volunteers, GVLT relies on volunteer groups from businesses, organizations, and clubs to help keep our trails in tip-top shape. Trail maintenance is typically seasonal with scheduled group trail projects from May through October.
Trails are essential to our physical wellbeing, our mental health, and our community’s social fabric.

This year, we partnered with Bozeman Health to create the Homestead Connector, completing a loop that connects from the Wellness Trail, added in 2022, to the East Ridge Trail of Highland Glen Nature Preserve.

Highland Glen Nature Preserve was born in 2013 when GVLT approached Bozeman Health, the property owner, with a proposal to create cross-country ski trails for community use. The winter trails were such a hit that we returned to ask permission to develop them into single-track summer trails. Bozeman Health was an active partner in planning the six miles of trails that now wind through wildflower-filled meadows, into gullies, and along cultivated fields.

GVLT and partners launched a different kind of trail—one of the area’s first water trails. Inspired by GVLT’s mission to connect people to the lands and rivers in beautiful southwest Montana, the Missouri Headwaters Paddler’s Trail runs from the Missouri River boat launch in Headwaters State Park to Toston Dam.

A key component of this project includes educating the public about how they can keep Montana waters healthy. Signage at the put-in and take-out encourages paddlers to follow Leave No Trace principles and explains how they can help maintain water quality and the sensitive lands surrounding the river corridor.

Special thanks to our partners, including Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, the Montana Association of Conservation Districts, and Montana Conservation Corps.

Water trails align with GVLT’s commitment to provide users of all abilities and skill levels with increased access and opportunities to enjoy the outdoors.
On a beautiful Saturday evening in mid-September, we held our first-ever Field Day. In the spirit of GVLT sunrise bicycle rides, snowless ski races, and community gatherings of yore, we wanted to throw it back to our roots, and, thus, Field Day was born. The new biennial event, generously hosted by Matt and Jacy Rothschiller at the conserved Rocky Creek Farm, brought together our longtime friends and new members of the GVLT family to connect with each other and the land. We enjoyed delicious food, local music, field games, and the company of 250 friends who share a passion for trails and conservation. The entire evening was such a success that we’re already excited to do it again!

During the evening, Anne Banks was presented with GVLT’s Lifetime Service Award in recognition of her ongoing commitment to our community’s open spaces and trails.

GVLT continued to build on the success of two programs dedicated to cultivating a culture of kindness on trails: GVLT Trail Ambassadors and Outside Kind. We were fortunate to welcome 32 Trail Ambassadors this year—our largest cohort ever! Each ambassador provides a friendly face on the trail, sharing helpful information about trail conditions, monitoring use, and offering gentle guidance on proper trail etiquette.

Similarly, Outside Kind is a community-wide campaign designed to share best practices and tips for enjoying the outdoors. GVLT focuses specifically on Hike Kind. One Montana, a local organization, leads Outside Kind with a grassroots alliance now comprised of more than 20 organizations, including GVLT.

GVLT hosts a Trail Ambassador training each spring to welcome new participants to the growing program.
During the past 33 years, GVLT has worked with 127 families to forever conserve over 65,000 acres. These numbers have increased significantly over the past few years, demonstrating an acceleration in the pace of land conservation. This year, we partnered with landowners to conserve 13,309 acres of some of the most highly productive, scenic, and wildlife-rich lands in southwest Montana, focusing on our five priority areas: Bozeman Pass, Gallatin and East Gallatin River Corridors, Amsterdam-Churchill, Gooch Hill, and Park County. Thanks to generous landowners and funding partners, we already have 11,000 acres in the pipeline for the next fiscal year.
When AMB West Chairman and Owner Arthur Blank purchased the Paradise Valley Ranch in 2019, he pledged to preserve the ranching traditions, wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty of the property. This year, he fulfilled that promise when he partnered with GVLT to establish a conservation easement on the 8,800-acre ranch—GVLT’s largest conservation easement to date and the largest in the Paradise Valley.

The Paradise Valley Ranch remains active in agricultural production and is currently leased out to local farming and ranching families.

With over 40 existing parcels, the property could have been easily subdivided and developed, but the conservation easement ensures it will stay whole. The property lies close to seven other conserved properties, anchoring an open landscape rich with wildlife and historic farms and ranches.

While Arthur Blank generously donated the financial value of this conservation easement, GVLT secured public and private funding this year that will enable us to purchase conservation easements from interested landowners in Park County, unlocking this tool for families that have not had access historically.
Conservation easements are a long-term partnership between landowners and GVLT. Together, we share a responsibility to protect the land for generations to come. The landowner is responsible for the day-to-day management of the land and enjoys the rights of ownership. GVLT is responsible for regularly monitoring the property to ensure the provisions of the easement and the vision of the original landowner are honored in perpetuity.

Dedicated to value-added stewardship, our Stewardship team seeks to build collaborative relationships with our landowners by listening to their needs, staying on top of current natural resource issues, and connecting them with local experts and funding sources to enhance the conservation values of their land.

Throughout the summer, Stewardship Director Jeremy Puckett (pictured) and Land Steward Kevin Grunewald make site visits to all of GVLT’s conservation easements.

Each year, your generous support enables our staff to create exponential impact and this year was no exception! We secured $8.2 million in public funding that is paid directly to landowners to purchase conservation easements. In addition, landowners donated $12.4 million in property value to leverage public and private funding.

WHAT IS A CONSERVATION EASEMENT?
In partnership, landowners and land trusts use these easements to conserve high-quality wildlife habitat, working farms and ranches, clean water, and scenic open space. When a landowner enters into this voluntary legal agreement, they are transferring their rights to develop and subdivide to GVLT in perpetuity.

This year:

13,309 total acres were conserved with GVLT
$8.2 million of public funding was secured by GVLT to purchase new easements
$12.4 million in property value was donated by easement owners

GVLT completed its largest easement at 8,800 acres

In partnership, landowners and land trusts use these easements to conserve high-quality wildlife habitat, working farms and ranches, clean water, and scenic open space. When a landowner enters into this voluntary legal agreement, they are transferring their rights to develop and subdivide to GVLT in perpetuity.
GVLT is uniquely positioned to address the challenges and embrace the opportunities presented by growth in the greater Yellowstone region. As we say around the office, "It’s go time!" This year we invested in fundraising and operations to build the necessary capital and capacity to scale our organization and meet our ambitious goals. You’ll see these efforts resulted in record-setting fundraising revenue. Thanks to your investment and our ability to leverage your gifts (as noted on the previous page), our bold dreams for the future of our community are within reach. Our impact is growing and we’re just getting started!

As a land trust that works in the business of forever, we’re keenly focused on the long term. It is critical that we build an organization that will outlive us all. In the last few years, we’ve seen significant investment and growth in our long-term funds, helping ensure we fulfill our stewardship obligations and deliver on our mission for years to come. While we’re trending in the right direction, there’s still work to be done. Your continued investment will ensure our staying power and leave a lasting legacy.
To achieve the ambitious goals outlined in our five-year strategic plan and expressed in our 30-year vision, we recognize that we need a community coalition as diverse as the landscapes we seek to access and protect. GVT’s NextGen Advisory Board plays a critical role in this effort, bringing unique perspectives and voices to the table. This group of young and mid-career professionals ensures we understand the constantly shifting needs of our community and helps us reach new people to support and engage with our mission. In return, GVT invests in NextGen Advisory Board members by providing valuable leadership training and networking opportunities for the valley’s future conservation leaders.
Limited space prevents us from listing all the donors who contributed over $1,000. This is not a reflection of our gratitude for your generous support.
Please email Development Director Justin Barth at justin@gvtl.org if you have made a planned gift through your will or estate and are not listed here so that we can thank you for your leadership.

Three Landowners donated significant land value through conservation projects and/or contributed to the GVLT Stewardship Fund to protect their conservation easements in perpetuity.

Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation • Kevin Kennedy & Tamie Parratte •
Margaret & Bruce Simonetta • Bob & Megan Spring • Sharon & Allison Westall

Please take a look at our Legacy Planning Giving Society members for including GVLT in your estate plans. The future of our trails and open spaces will be built on today’s planned gifts.

Sarah Helfrich & Creston Stewart • Judith Springborn • Maria Robbins •
Dave & Rachel Rockafellow • Patricia Simmons & Ed Verry • Ken & Jenny Younger • Michael Groth & Ileana Zapatero • Zaniboni Lighting

Dan Simon • Alicia & Dan Singer • SMA Architecture • Design •
John Buckas & Patricia Smith • Solo Family Foundation • Spine Climbing Center • Lynn Spitter • Judith Springfork • Frank & Mary Stanley •
Hil Stanley • Laura Stanley • Tonya Stevens • Sarah Helftich & Cecon Stevens •
Stockman Bank • Storm Castle Foundation • Strasbourg Foundation •
Brad & Virginia Stratton • William Stratton • Keith Strong • Susan Kay Padsworth Foundation • Gerald Buckley & Elisabeth Swanson • Tandor Stompechwer Weamer & Kelly, PLLC • Richard & Laura Taylor • Rachel & Todd Thodin •
Michael Thomas • Thomas J. Holli Family Foundation • Walther & Rita Thurman •
Whitney & Sarah Titon • Titan Traps, LLC • Russ & Lisa Tuckerman •
Sally Uhlmann • Whitney & Sarah Titon • Titan Traps, LLC • Russ & Lisa Tuckerman •
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