

PROTECTING WILD SPACES & HAPPY PLACES

# WOOD RIVER LAND TRUST

SUMMER 2021



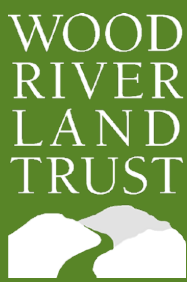
WOOD  
RIVER  
LAND  
TRUST



**BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE**  
Smart planning *today*  
can ensure a vibrant  
community for all

**BEAVERS: ECOSYSTEM  
ENGINEERS**  
What we can learn from  
beavers to ensure a climate  
resilient *tomorrow*

**BREAKING GROUND!**  
A new community orchard  
ensures our agricultural  
heritage has a place in our  
Valley *forever*



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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.*

*Cover Photo: DJ Glisson, Firefly Imageworks*





A LETTER FROM

# DAVID WOODWARD



This summer has been like no other in the Wood River Valley. As I watch river levels drop on the Big Wood, I check the Hailey stream gauge online and learn that almost every day we are setting a new record, as extreme drought conditions persist. This summer, I remind myself that the river truly is the life blood of this valley. Ensuring its health and the health of the riparian corridor along its banks are critical to the Land Trust mission. It's clear, we need to create a balance between growth and the protection of our natural resources.

When I joined the Board of Directors in 2014, I was excited to join a group committed to community discussions. The river and our open spaces are something that everyone here is passionate about, and they initiate important dialogue. From creating outdoor spaces that are inclusive to all members of our Valley, to providing community forums for your voice to be heard in planning discussions, the Wood River Land Trust has ensured that conservation is part of the conversation.

Today, we continue to work with landowners to protect and restore wildlife habitat and the Big Wood River and its tributaries. We work with the community to ensure that there is access to nature close to home. And, we work with municipalities to include conservation into master planning decisions.

Of course, our work is ongoing. As is the case with Preserving the Croy Canyon parcel adjacent to our Simons/Bauer Preserve, your support makes it possible to host community meetings, demonstrate support for conservation to our elected officials, and bring creative conservation solutions to the table.

The urgency of our mission has never been greater. With the continued financial support from people like you, the Land Trust can play a vital role in ensuring that the Wood River Valley will remain a treasured landscape for generations to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Woodward".

Dave Woodward, Board Chair

You can help Preserve Croy Canyon – scan this QR code to learn more.



For a limited time, new donations up to \$25,000 will be matched by an anonymous donor.

# BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

*Smart planning today can ensure a vibrant community for all  
A special note from the Executive Director*



We all had a sense it was coming, but recent articles confirmed it. The growth pressures since COVID-19, the drought, and the community housing crisis have the looming potential to change our Valley forever. Now is the time to make hard, but crucial decisions to retain a sustainable, vibrant, and healthy Valley that we get to call home.

The Wood River Valley is in the grips of a historic drought. This has had a devastating impact on agricultural production, wildfires, stream flows, and our wild trout fishery. It is not as if our Valley hasn't survived droughts cycles before: in the 1920s, the stream gauge in Hailey actually read 0 cfs. Nature is very resilient and has an ability to bounce back when left to its own accord, but what many people don't realize is the tremendous impact the unprecedented growth is having on our Valley. It is easy to recognize how development may destroy a favorite view, take away important wildlife habitat, or add traffic to our roads, but have you stopped to think about what it does to our already strained water supply?

Year after year we find ourselves with not enough water - or too much water in the Spring when flooding occurs. And the studies on climate change only predict things getting worse with warmer springs and dryer summers. So what's the answer? We must bring conservation to the planning table!

The latest Blaine County Comprehensive Plan shows that the County is only 1/3 built out. Meaning, if nothing is done, our current zoning would allow for a 200% increase in development located mostly in our rural outlying areas. This means more sprawl, traffic, habitat destruction, and demand on our natural resources, most notably water.

With the current housing crisis, there has been talk that we need to build more to help alleviate the problem. My contention is that more development, especially in the County as it is zoned today, will only make our housing crisis more acute by building houses that are most likely out of the price range for working residents. Additionally, this development which is commonly referred to as suburban sprawl, demands more services and allows water-guzzling lawns and new wells while increasing impermeable surfaces, all of which have a cumulative negative impact on our already fragile natural water supply.

As we look toward tomorrow, we realize those areas we set aside for wildlife habitat can also help us sustain our Valley by balancing the impacts of growth, protecting floodplains, allowing for groundwater recharge, and retaining a vibrant community. The Wood River Land Trust continues working toward identifying and protecting the most important places to provide these benefits. We're working with local housing agencies and the County to look at creative solutions that demonstrate that open space protection and affordable housing are not mutually exclusive - that smart planning can ensure we can sustain the resources we all depend on.

Will you join us today, to ensure that our community retains its vibrancy for all tomorrows?



Scott Boettger, Executive Director



USE THE QR CODE TO JOIN US ON A  
VIRTUAL MOUNTAIN BIKE RIDE ALONG  
THE SELLGREN TRAIL!







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# BETTER RECREATION THROUGH CONSERVATION

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While most of our trails are on our public Preserves (lands that we own) - we also work with landowners to place public access easements across private land. Public access easements ensure that trails remain open to the public now and for generations to come.

One of the most iconic examples of a trail that is on a public access easement is the Sellgren Trail in the White Clouds Trail System in Sun Valley.

The Sellgren Trail came to be through a donation of a trail easement across private land by “Ricky” Bosted, a long time resident of Idaho. The family of Ricky’s late husband, Dave Sellgren developed the Bigwood Golf Course. During the design of the White Clouds Trail, The Sun Valley Co. contacted Ricky about donating the easement for the trail, and that led her to the Wood River Land Trust.

At a little under a mile long, the Sellgren Trail easement ranks among the smallest projects Wood River Land Trust has undertaken. However, the small size does not equate to small importance; the Sellgren Trail is a critical part of making the White Clouds trail a full loop!

Chris Leman of Bigwood Backcountry Trails, who originally built the White Cloud trail, was thrilled when the deal was signed. “Permanent easements across private lands are a huge aspect of this project, allowing public access and trail connection for recreation,” he said.

As part of the responsibility of holding an easement, the Land Trust regularly monitors the property while the Sun Valley Company maintains the trail.

To access the Sellgren Trail, park at the small dirt parking lot at the intersection of Saddle Road and Saddle Lane. Walk up the steep hill toward the bench and intersection with the main flow trail. Head north, and as you wrap around the back of the trail system, you will find the Sellgren Trail section! This whole loop makes for a great trail run or mountain bike ride!

By working together, the Wood River Land Trust, the Sun Valley Company, and the Sellgren family came to an agreement that has made the White Clouds Trail system a treasure for our whole community.



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*If you would like to learn more about placing a conservation or public access easement on your property, reach out to Keri York at [keri@woodriverlandtrust.org](mailto:keri@woodriverlandtrust.org) or (208) 788-3947.*

Today. Tomorrow. Forever.



# APPLES, BERRIES, & PLUMS, OH MY!

*Breaking ground on the new community orchard ensures our agricultural heritage has a place in our Valley forever*

Apple picking, cider pressing, cozy sweaters and other autumn memories may not be too far from your thoughts as we come to the end of summer. They are also at the front of mind for the Wood River Land Trust.

“Picking apples at the local orchards in Pennsylvania is a treasured memory of mine” says Scott Boettger, Executive Director of the Wood River Land Trust, as he considers the future site of the brand new Community Orchard at Colorado Gulch.

“We would go as a family to pick apples, and we would spend time outside as a family watching them get crushed into cider. It was so heartbreaking to watch those small family farms and orchards get turned into subdivisions and other development.”

Sitting adjacent to the Land Trust’s Colorado Gulch Preserve is a two-acre field that will soon be blossoming with fruit trees, brambling with u-pick berry bushes, and buzzing with plenty of additional pollinators.



## A SPACE FOR COMMUNITY AND WILDLIFE

Keri York, Lands Program Director for the Wood River Land Trust, describes the vision for the space that will unfold over the next few years.

“The Colorado Gulch Orchard is going to be a community program that brings people together around food production while demonstrating how conservation and agriculture can go hand-in-hand.” she says.

The crops that have been chosen are heirloom varieties - chosen for their resilience. These varieties can grow with less water and less intensive pest management practices, and they can be raised in ways that nurture soil health and provide habitat for native bees, birds, and wildlife.

“The Wood River Land Trust's community orchard at the Colorado Gulch Preserve will not only provide a habitat for pollinators and beautification for the river corridor, it will further enhance our community's food sovereignty. We need more community spaces, like this orchard, producing food and protecting biodiversity for generations to come

-Amy Mattias,

Program Director of  
the Sun Valley Institute for Resilience





## OUR HERITAGE REVITALIZED

Historically, many traditional homesteads and pastoral farms practiced strategies of crop rotation, animal husbandry, and no-till planting that maintained healthy lands for crops and the ecosystem. Over time, these systems have been transformed to produce high amounts of commodities at lower cost for our growing population.

Due to growth and development, historic homestead fruit orchards of the Wood River Valley have largely been converted to residential space. By hosting a two-acre orchard available to the public, the Land Trust will be growing a community demonstration space that will connect us to our agricultural past. The orchard will be a place for students and adults to volunteer and learn about aspects of fruit tree production, including planting, harvesting, pruning, and watering. They will also learn how birds, insects, and other wildlife use orchards as habitat.

But the real impact will be to us, as a community, to have more places close to home to build and create lasting memories that we can hold, cherish, and pass on to our future generations.

## TOGETHER, WE CAN REALIZE THIS VISION

While we were buzzing with excitement as we watched the installation of the first trees, it also made us realize how much work there is still to be done. This community space is a dream in the making, and we cannot do it without you.

Consider making a gift to the Orchard at the Colorado Gulch Preserve to ensure our agricultural heritage continues to thrive in the heart of the Valley.

### COME VISIT THE ORCHARD

We will be giving tours of the new orchard space, so you can come see it in person! Reserve your spot today by contacting Courtney Jelaco at [cjelaco@woodriverlandtrust.org](mailto:cjelaco@woodriverlandtrust.org) or (208) 788-3947

9:30-10:30 AM on September 15

9:30-10:30 AM on September 22

9:30-10:30 AM on October 13



# CONNECTING TO THE LAND THROUGH ART

## *Taking a deeper look at our surroundings with our Artist in Residence*

Imagine starting a summer morning at the Draper Preserve - the birds are singing and the air still holds its morning chill.

This morning experience was the backdrop for our first "Field Notes: Sketching Birds and Wildflowers in the Field" event with local artist, Poo Wright-Pulliam. At the event, participants spent 45 minutes learning about basic wildflower and bird anatomy before heading out onto the preserve to apply their skills while working in their own field notebooks.

This event has been part of a new Artist in Residence program started this year with The Wood River Land Trust. Our resident artist, Poo, came to the Land Trust with extensive knowledge on local flora and fauna and engaged our community in observation and education.

From 3rd graders to adults, Poo has inspired a wide variety of folks to look at their natural surroundings in a different light.

We cherish moments like the Field Notes event even more after the isolation of COVID 19. We walked away from this event not only with new entries in our field notebooks, but also with shared experiences, heartfelt connections, and new memories together on the land.

This Artist in Residence Program was the first, but not the last. Check out our website to stay tuned for future opportunities to engage with the lands you have helped protect.

“Poo cultivates a sense of wonder and curiosity that connects people to the preserves through a whole new lens.”  
-Hannah Meenach  
Community Lands Steward





# BEAVERS: ECOSYSTEM ENGINEERS

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*What we can learn from beavers to ensure a climate resilient tomorrow?*

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In 2018, the massive Sharps wildfire burned 65,000 acres, including parts of the Little Wood River and tributaries. What was once sweeping rangeland habitat for wildlife including sage-grouse, and grazing land for livestock, was engulfed in flames. Expecting complete devastation after the fire, landowners, federal and state agencies, and local conservation organizations were all shocked when aerial images revealed some emerald green oases that the fire seemed to have skipped over all together. What was so special about these areas that prevented them from being burned?

After some investigation, we determined that the green patches that survived the fire had been inhabited by beavers! Spots with existing beaver dams, and even the sites of old beaver dams, which have created ponds and floodplains were still marshy and filled with lush vegetation.

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM NATURE

At the Wood River Land Trust we work to utilize the right restoration techniques for the right situations. Based firmly in science and research, our team analyzes the needs of each stretch of river to determine what kind of restoration should be applied.

Sometimes, that may require a large-scale initiative that utilizes heavy machinery and expert contractors, and sometimes, all we need are woven willows and elbow grease.

One technique that we utilize on smaller tributaries is “process based restoration” - restoration practices that mimic, and encourage natural processes. After the Sharps Fire, with a suite of partners, we set out to restore creeks that had been burned by mimicking these areas that proved to be highly resilient in the face of wildfire.



## MIMICKING BEAVER DAMS FOR RESTORATION

Using ‘process-based restoration’ techniques, we are creating “human-made beaver habitat” post-fire to create diverse habitats that will restore hydrology and welcome back the mammals and birds that used this land.

These structures are made of pounded posts interwoven with willow branches. Named by scientists, these beaver dam analog (BDA) structures mimic the work that beavers do by creating pools and capturing water and sediment. Other structures - called post assisted log structures (PALS) - are made entirely of sticks and branches and create meandering bends within straightened sections of stream.

Without this kind of rehabilitation, these little tributaries would slice deeper and deeper into the fire-damaged hills, creating steep banks that can't hold riparian vegetation.

The water would move faster through the landscape, increasing the sediment that is carried down to the Little Wood River and subsequent reservoirs.

This type of restoration is becoming more popular because it can bring back floodplain areas and complex habitat, such as wet meadows, that are important for sage-grouse and other wildlife.

Our hope is that these stream restoration projects could create even more fire resilience in the future.

## BEAVER DAM RESTORATION ON THE RANGE

But that isn't all! In addition to the work that we are doing using BDA structures to restore the Little Wood Drainage, we are also working with the University of Idaho and with private ranchers to examine how BDA structures can restore tributary health on working rangelands.



This beaver-dammed wetland in Baugh Creek, Idaho served as an oasis during the 2018 Sharps Fire in the Little Wood drainage east of the Wood River Valley.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOE WHEATON, UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF WATERSHED SCIENCES

Throughout history, beavers and other wildlife were removed from the landscape to accommodate grazing. This has led to streams cutting deeply into the landscape, becoming disconnected from the surrounding landscape. Ironically, this has in turn led to the disappearance of floodplain and mesic meadows that are important for wildlife and working rangelands.

## A HEALTHY ECOSYSTEM FOR LANDSCAPE RESILIENCE

As we restore these tributaries and reconnect them to the landscape, we can regenerate riparian habitats. This can create healthier range for sheep and cattle as well as enhancing overall ecosystem health for all species.

Not only are we restoring this land for tributary health and to accommodate the animals that need it now, but in the face of a changing climate, these restoration sites will hopefully prove as resilient as the beaver-inhabited sites did in the 2018 Sharps fire.

Of course, the Wood River Land Trust isn't doing this alone.

As a member of the Wood River Land Trust, you are among those critical partners that make the work we do possible. Members of the Land Trust can look out across the landscape, and know that you are helping to restore these interconnected ecosystems and rangelands that make our home here in the heart of Idaho so iconic.

## HOW DOES PROCESS BASED RESTORATION WORK?



### RIPARIAN PONDS

By holding sediment behind the BDA structure, this kind of restoration technique can bring back floodplain areas, complex habitat, and create wet meadows that are important for sage-grouse and other wildlife.

### BDA STRUCTURES

These structures - made of pounded posts interwoven with willow branches - mimic the work that beavers do by creating pools and capturing water and sediment.

### SEDIMENT TRANSPORT

Without this kind of rehabilitation, these little tributaries would slice deeper and deeper into the ground. The water would move faster through the landscape, increasing the sediment that is carried down to reservoirs and slower moving water.





PROCESS BASED RESTORATION  
 BY THE NUMBERS

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STRUCTURES INSTALLED

**150**

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MILES OF TRIBUTARIES BEING RESTORED

**6**

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PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERS

**15**



TAKE A DEEPER DIVE WITH THE QR CODE BELOW! IN THIS VIDEO YOU'LL SEE HOW WE INSTALL THESE BDA STRUCTURES







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[www.woodriverlandtrust.org](http://www.woodriverlandtrust.org)

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organization (Tax ID: 82-0474191).  
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as allowed by law. Public financial  
information is available by contacting  
our office.



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## ESTO PERPUTUA AWARD

*Idaho State Historical Society Awards WRLT*

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Preserving the character of the Wood River Valley is at the heart of the work we do at the Wood River Land Trust. We are so honored to accept the Esto Perpetua award from the Idaho State Historical Society. The Esto Perpetua Award takes its name from the state's motto, "let it be perpetual," and for the past 22 years, the Idaho State Historical Society has recognized people and organizations who have preserved and promoted Idaho's history.

Whether it is preserving vintage housing, protecting traditional agriculture areas, restoring abused sites, or protecting and preserving life-giving rivers and waterways, the Esto Perpetua Award recognizes organizations like the Wood River Land Trust who protect a sense of place. Our successes in integrating place and heritage truly reflect the Idaho state motto: let it be perpetual.