

PROTECTING WILD SPACES & HAPPY PLACES

WOOD RIVER LAND TRUST

WINTER 2023



WOOD
RIVER
LAND
TRUST



CONNECTING
COMMUNITIES TO
NATURE RIGHT AT
HOME

A PATH TO INCLUSIVITY
Hare Family Trail
welcomes all abilities

EXPLORING THE
IMPACT OF SIDE
CHANNELS

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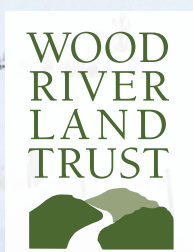
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Our mission is to protect and sustain the treasured landscapes and life-giving waters of the Wood River Valley and inspire love for this special place for generations to come.

A LETTER FROM THE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As we head into the holiday season, we are grateful for the tremendous support from people like you. So much has been accomplished because our community cares about our Valley and its future.

Our team is busy this time of year: wrapping up field work, meeting with landowners who want to protect land for our future, crunching data, filling out permits and writing grants for restoration projects...the winter always seems to promise a time to slow down, but we're already gearing up for next year.

You are an important part of this effort. As part of the Wood River Land Trust, you're making sure our Valley remains incredible, now and into the future. Every day we're working to protect more land, restore the Big Wood River, and make sure that everyone in our community has access to these places that restore ourselves.

I hope you enjoy reading about just a few of the things you're making possible. Thank you for being a vital part of our journey. Together, we can protect the wild spaces and happy places of our Valley.

Amy Trujillo, Executive Director

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES TO NATURE RIGHT AT HOME

In the heart of Blaine County, remarkable partnerships are setting the stage for bridging the gap between people of all backgrounds and the natural world that surrounds us. Together with our partners, Wood River Land Trust is redefining access to nature and inspiring connection to the environment for people of all ages and walks of life through the creation, expansion, and improvement of three major preserves within our communities.

In many places, the pursuit of 400+ acres of public open space often involves a long car journey. However, we believe that the beauty and tranquility of nature shouldn't be reserved for remote locations up north. Wood River Land Trust has worked tirelessly with our partner cities to establish three major preserves, each with its unique character and significance, and each bringing the wonders of the natural world right to our doorsteps:

Howard Preserve in Bellevue: This remarkable preserve spans 35 acres of cottonwood forest and establishes riverfront access for all to enjoy. Offering some of the community's favorite swimming holes and fishing spots, it is a testament to our partnership with the City of Bellevue, providing a peaceful oasis that's just a short walk from downtown.

Hailey Greenway: In collaboration with the City of Hailey, we established the Hailey Greenway, which covers 476 acres, and miles of trails and riverfront beauty. This preserve invites Hailey

residents and visitors alike to immerse themselves in the natural world without the need for a lengthy drive.

Warm Springs Preserve in Ketchum: Our partnership with the City of Ketchum led to the creation of the Warm Springs Preserve, which boasts 65 acres of park-like open space and access to Warm Springs Creek.

These preserves have more in common than just their proximity to our downtown cores. They offer:

- **Walkability:** These preserves are easily accessible by foot, making them ideal destinations for spontaneous nature encounters.
- **River Access:** Each preserve provides access to the river for fishing, swimming, or other play, enhancing the overall experience.
- **Community Connection:** Our preserves serve as gathering places for families, special occasions, and educational programming. They are, in essence, 'community centers without the building,' fostering a sense of togetherness and belonging.

- **Wildlife Encounters:** Visitors have the opportunity to witness majestic wildlife in their natural habitat, providing a deeper connection to the ecosystem.

- **Universal Access:** Wood River Land Trust is committed to improving accessibility. We are actively evaluating areas for universal access trails and amenities to ensure everyone can enjoy these natural spaces.

As Daniela Anguita, Community Engagement Coordinator from the Flourish Foundation, noted during a recent tour with families from Idaho Base Camp, "These are your public lands." It's a sentiment we wholeheartedly embrace, encouraging everyone to explore and enjoy these preserves close to home.

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR PRESERVES AND WHERE YOU CAN ACCESS THEM



Volunteers Make a Difference

From trail maintenance to habitat restoration, Wood River Land Trust volunteers help shape our community into one that thrives in harmony with the environment.

Volunteers from groups like First Lite, Higher Ground, and the Sage School help remove old barbed wire fencing to help wildlife migrate. The ERC has helped with Weed Warriors and dog poop awareness campaigns.

In 2022, we took on a new effort, partnering with Boise State University and local birding enthusiasts to create a citizen science bird surveying program. This initiative, made possible by a grant from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, marked the beginning of a journey where birding and volunteerism intersected.

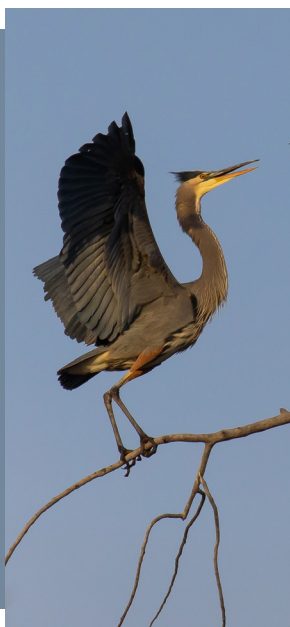
This past spring, 10 dedicated volunteers took part in trainings through Cornell and BSU before embarking on two weeks of in-field surveys. Armed with their observations and the eBird app, they meticulously documented the avian wonders

they encountered. Our volunteers spent 66 hours and 26 minutes monitoring our restoration sites, observed 2,240 birds, and documented 94 different species of birds!

Having this data over time, gathered with precision and care, and combined with other data collection like physical habitat measurements, water quality, and benthic macroinvertebrate data, will allow us to measure the impact of restoration efforts on our preserves and empower us to make informed land management decisions.

This program is led by our Stewardship Coordinator, Ben Majsterek, and local teacher, Larry Barnes - both have been a driving force in making these efforts a success.

If you'd like to try out birding and this special form of volunteerism, reach out to Ben for more information and to express your interest in participating next season. Ben can be reached at ben@woodriverlandtrust.org.



A Path to Inclusivity

If you visited the Colorado Gulch Preserve in Hailey this fall, you may have encountered trail closure signs. Although it was a temporary disruption, it was the beginning of a transformation – a focus on making sure that everyone who wants to can enjoy these special places.

It's well-documented that time in nature has real benefits to our physical and mental health. Spending time in our public preserves is a great, free way for people to get those health benefits. We firmly believe that nature should be a sanctuary for everyone, irrespective of age, ability, or background. So we've begun to ask ourselves, "Are these places truly open to everyone? Are there simple things we could do that might make it easier for people to have equal access to the outdoors?"

This fall, with the generous support of Dick Hare's family, we took the first step to making our beloved natural areas more accessible.

The first simple step was to look at what places in our most used preserves were out of the floodway and had physical characteristics conducive to converting to universal access trails. This led to the creation of the Universal Access Trail at the Colorado Gulch Preserve. We improved 1,573 feet of existing trails, and added over 1,471 feet of new trail. Now, in addition to the more rustic experience of other trails in the Preserve, we have a significant trail that all members of our community can use to bask in the serenity and beauty of the Colorado Gulch Preserve. We've named it "The Hare Family Trail" to express our profound gratitude for the family's crucial support for this project.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

These trail improvements are designed to break down physical barriers that can keep people with disabilities from fully experiencing the great outdoors. This can be people with permanent disabilities, but also people recovering from injury or losing mobility with age. Universal Access Trail standards are designed to accommodate mobility devices such as wheelchairs, walkers, and strollers. Additionally, benches have been strategically placed along the trail to offer resting spots for users, ensuring that everyone can engage with nature at their own pace.

More than just addressing physical barriers, these universal access trails send a powerful message that our natural spaces are open to all, regardless of physical abilities. This encourages people of all backgrounds to explore, connect, and appreciate the beauty of our preserves, side by side.

In addition to the Colorado Gulch Preserve project, we are also in the early stages of creating universal access trails at the Simons/Bauer Preserve, thanks to generous support from The Hollis Foundation. The trail will create a pathway that connects Lions Park to Mountain Humane. These trails were thoughtfully designed to minimize impacts to wildlife by keeping the trail away from the creek bottom, to allow free movement of wildlife through the Croy Creek corridor to the Big Wood River. This trail is expected to open in the Spring of 2024.

Occasionally in this work we've been asked, "Why do you need to make these trails so that people with disabilities can use them?" But, why wouldn't you want to include them? These places were protected for our entire community. We are committed to delivering on that promise.



Accessibility is the degree to which people can independently access a device, service, or place without barriers.

Universal Design Principles help us think about designing programs and places that will be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

Example: When you build a new trail, consider the substrate, grade and width of the trail. Universally designed trails can be enjoyed by everyone: parents with strollers, friends that like to walk side by side, families with multiple generations exercising together, trail runners, people with disabilities, and many others.

Land Trust Alliance Advisory Council on Inclusive Health and Disabilities, Open to All, A Disability Inclusion Guide for Land Trusts (2021).

Exploring the Impact of Side Channels

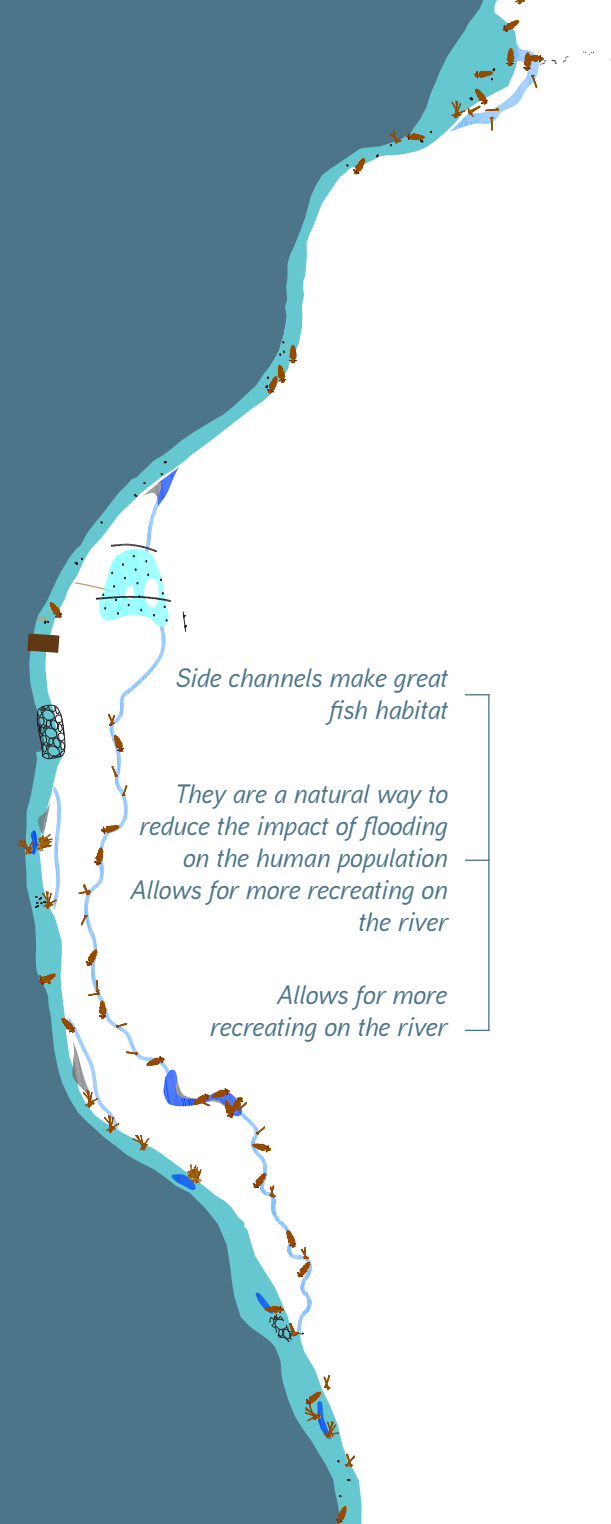
For generations, the Big Wood River has been more than just a body of water – it's a source of inspiration, memories, livelihood, and it unites us in our commitment to preserving the natural beauty of our surroundings.

Listen to long-time residents, and they might tell you that the fishing just isn't what it used to be – and they're right! Over the years, the changes in the Big Wood River's ecosystem have affected not only its appearance but also its vitality. With your help, we're trying to change that. One of the remarkable initiatives that is contributing to the river's restoration is the creation and restoration of side channels.

By reconnecting the river to its floodplain and creating or restoring old side channels, we can mitigate flood flows for our human communities and simultaneously create new spawning and rearing habitat for fish. Cory McCaffrey, the Land Trust's River Program Director confirms, "The best way to increase our fish populations is to increase the amount of habitat that is available to them."

In just the past 2 years, the Wood River Land Trust has opened up ¾ of a mile of side channels through the Lower Howard Preserve and Colorado Gulch restoration projects. Our River team is actively planning seven more restoration projects along the Big Wood and its tributaries that will reconnect old side channels, restore floodplain habitat, and remove fish passage barriers.

For locals and frequent visitors alike, the Big Wood River is the beating heart of the Wood River Valley. Next time you find yourself on the riverbank, take a moment to ponder – what does the river mean to you? Let's remember that every action we take today ripples into the future. Your support enables more restoration and protection, ultimately creating a better Big Wood River.



DICK FOSBURY'S BRIDGE

The late Blaine County Commissioner Dick Fosbury worked closely with Land Trust staff for years to plan how we could both rehabilitate river and side channel habitat at Colorado Gulch and replace the Colorado Gulch bridge that washed out during the 2017 floods. The restoration work is done, and now the partnership continues as Blaine County is obtaining construction bids for the bridge. We are accepting donations to help fund the bridge, with Dick's family inviting his friends and family all over the world to help make this a reality. The County is also taking suggestions for clever ways to name the bridge that capture Dick's spirit and dedication to our community. Please email naming suggestions to info@woodriverlandtrust.org.



CASH AND RECURRING GIFTS

Gifts of cash, check, or by credit card get put to use immediately. You can make a one-time gift or set up recurring gifts. Monthly donations provide a consistent and reliable source of support, playing a crucial role in sustaining and advancing our mission.

GIFTS OF STOCK

Considering donating stocks to support the Wood River Land Trust. Provide this information to your broker:

- Wood River Land Trust's taxpayer identification number: 82-0474191
- Transfer shares to Vanguard: DTC #0062
- For the Benefit Of: Wood River Land Trust Company
- Brokerage Account Number: 17790967
- Please contact Courtney Jelaco to provide Wood River Land Trust with the name of the security, the number of shares to be donated, and the name and phone number of your broker.

INDIVIDUAL RETIREMENT ACCOUNT (IRA) GIFTS

IRA gifts to a nonprofit, often referred to as "Qualified Charitable Distributions" (QCDs), are a way for individuals who are at least 70 ½ years old to donate funds from their Individual Retirement Account (IRA) directly to a qualified nonprofit organization while enjoying certain tax advantages.

DONOR ADVISED FUNDS

A donor-advised fund (DAF) is a philanthropic vehicle that allows individuals or organizations to make charitable contributions, receive immediate tax benefits, and then recommend how those funds should be distributed to nonprofit organizations over time. Make your gifts through your donor-advised fund to support our conservation efforts.

PLANNED GIFTS

Planned giving is a heartfelt commitment that transcends time. It's a way to integrate your passion for conservation seamlessly into your long-term financial plans. By choosing to include the Wood River Land Trust in your will or estate plans, you're securing a vibrant and thriving future for the Wood River Valley's landscapes and wildlife. Discover how you can create a legacy that preserves the beauty of the Wood River Valley for generations to come.

WAYS TO GIVE

By giving to your local land trust, you become a catalyst for positive change in your community and beyond. Your contribution directly supports the preservation and stewardship of critical natural areas, ensuring that open spaces, wildlife habitats, and recreational opportunities remain intact for current and future generations.



MAKE YOUR GIFT TODAY

Please consult your tax professional and financial advisor regarding your specific tax benefits. Questions for us? Please contact:

Courtney Jelaco, Director of Development | phone: 208-788-3947 | email: cjelaco@woodriverlandtrust.org



KERI

Meet the Team that Protects our Land



BEN

Over the years, supporters like you have helped the Land Trust protect over 27,000 acres of land. Meet the team that's out there every day working to ensure our lands remain vibrant places for both nature and our community.

Lands Program Director, **KERI YORK**, leads people towards creative conservation solutions that will benefit our community for years to come. Keri has spent this year working with willing landowners on 7,000 acres-worth of new conservation projects. These projects are in various stages of planning and negotiations, and represent opportunities for new public preserves, critical wildlife habitat protected, and productive agricultural lands preserved. While working on these new projects, Keri also works with local agricultural producers to find creative water efficiency solutions, enhance pollinator habitat along the edges of ag fields, and works with a multitude of partners on Valley-wide issues like resolving human-wildlife conflicts, and finding creative solutions to our water crisis.

Stewardship Coordinator, **BEN MAJSTEREK**, works to enhance habitat on our lands and make our public preserves safe and welcoming places for everyone to enjoy. In addition to habitat management at our other 13 public preserves, Ben has been overseeing the trail improvement projects at Simons/Bauer and Colorado Gulch Preserves, which broke ground this fall. If you see Ben on the trails, say hello!

Land Protection Specialist, **CHAD STOESZ**, monitors our 43 conservation easements and provides support to our easement landowners. He spends the summer visiting over 13,000 acres of conserved properties from Challis to Shoshone, ensuring the conservation values protected by easements continue to thrive. Our partnerships with easement landowners are a critical piece to protecting lands that provide ecological resilience for our region.

Our 2023 summer interns, **GAVIN HOIOSEN** and **ISABELLA CRONIN**, spent the summer out on our conserved lands, helping with monitoring, weed control, preserve maintenance, and data collection. Their internship gives them an introduction to the wide breadth of work of a Land Trust, and provides much needed stewardship capacity during the summer.



CHAD



GAVIN & ISABELLA

MAKING A SPLASH AT THE BIG WOOD RIVER CLEANUP

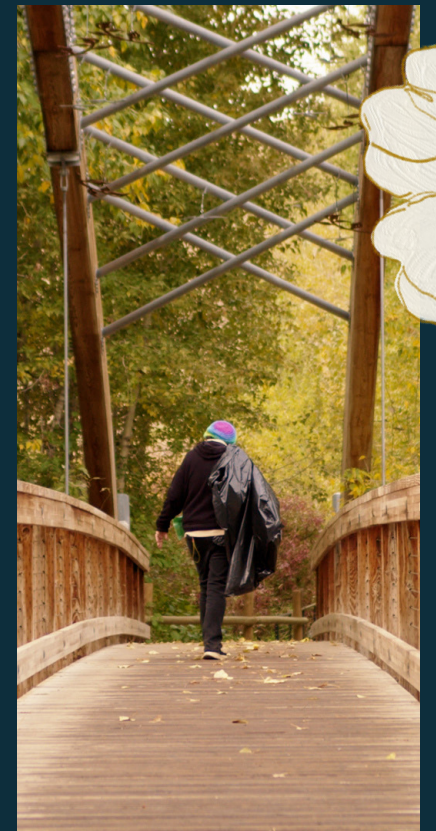
This fall, the 6th annual Big Wood River Cleanup rallied community members, river enthusiasts, and nature lovers to make a tangible difference. This year, volunteers collected 800 pounds of trash from the river and its banks. It was a day of community camaraderie, environmental stewardship, and an opportunity to celebrate our beloved Big Wood River.

Participants arrived with sleeves rolled up, armed with gloves, trash bags, and an infectious spirit. Their mission was clear: to ensure the Big Wood River and its surroundings remained pristine and inviting for all. The commitment of these dedicated volunteers shone brightly; their hard work was a testament to their love for our local waterways.

A huge thanks goes out to everyone who scoured the river for trash, to the Hurdy Gurdy Girls for providing music at the after party, and to our generous sponsors.

The Big Wood River Cleanup is more than just an environmental initiative; it is an opportunity for people from various walks of life to come together in the spirit of unity and shared purpose. Whether you are a seasoned volunteer or first-time participant, everyone leaves with unforgettable memories and the satisfaction of knowing we've contributed to a cleaner, healthier environment.

If you missed out on this year's Big Wood River Cleanup, plan on it for next year. Bring your friends and family and be a part of something bigger, as together, we can continue to make waves of positive change. Let's keep the momentum going and ensure the Big Wood River Cleanup remains the splash heard 'round the valley!



WOOD RIVER LAND TRUST



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www.woodriverlandtrust.org

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Public financial information is
available by contacting our office.*

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BREAKING NEWS: COMMUNITY SUPPORT LEVERAGES FEDERAL GRANT TO RESTORE WARM SPRINGS PRESERVE!

This just in – the Land Trust and City of Ketchum received word that the Bureau of Reclamation has awarded a \$1.7 million grant to restore Warm Springs Creek and improve the irrigation system at Warm Springs Preserve. Gifts from the community leveraged this incredible grant, and we’re looking forward to getting started!

The grants were awarded across 11 states for collaborative projects focused on water conservation, water management, and restoration efforts that will result in significant benefits to ecosystem or watershed health.

This grant is just one example of what your support makes possible - leveraging your gifts for amazing impact for our community!

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