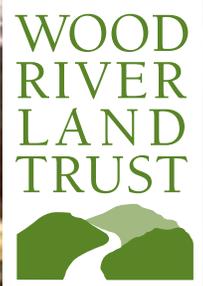


Wood River Land Trust

Fall 2015

Protecting the heart
of the valley...now
and for the future.



Dave and Sarah Woodward
on a sunrise trip to the Rock
Creek Ranch sage grouse
leks this spring.

Celebrating Your Investment

“The greatest use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it.” —William James

SAVING LAND is about protecting the things we love about where we live. The fresh air and incredible wildlife. The hiking, biking, and skiing trails. The working lands that keep us in touch with our history. It’s about the clean water that supports everything from the trout in the stream to the snow they make on Baldy in the winter.

Your support in the past year has helped to preserve all of this—now, and for the future. In this last fiscal year, which ran from April 1, 2014 to March 30, 2015, every dollar you contributed was matched

with ten dollars from federal grants and contributions from landowners. This leverage of funding is the formula that makes land preservation happen at the scale that we’re able to achieve—and it all begins with you.

Thank you so much for your generosity, foresight, and leadership. In return, our promise to you is simple—your investment is protecting the character that makes this valley feel like home—whether you spend a day, a month, or a lifetime exploring it.

Thank you for your shared belief in this vision.
—Dave Woodward, Treasurer



I love hiking this time of year—the aspens are changing overnight. And of course, the Trailing of the Sheep and Jazz Festivals.
—Dede Huish



OUT ON THE LAND: What will you be doing this Fall?

We love Porcupine Creek this time of year. Wonderful golden colors, blue grouse and chukars, brook trout getting ready to spawn and in their finest colors, elk bugling, brilliant blue skies, and no one around. It’s really a magical part of the world, particularly in the fall.
—Trent Jones and Family

For more profiles from the community (including our newest Board member, Gayle Stevenson) please visit our newly redesigned website!
www.WoodRiverLandTrust.org

This year, we’ll be getting to know the valley, and everything it has to offer. But I’m looking forward to leaf peeping and riding mountain bikes with our boys.
—Cydney Pearce, the Land Trust’s new Office & Finance Manager.



Learning to Stray from the Beaten Path

by Morgan Atkinson

I STARTED my summer at the Rock Creek Ranch learning the property and counting the reptiles and amphibians. In my first week I never strayed far from the main dirt road that cuts through the center of the property and parallels the main creek. I kept my eyes close to the ground, but the frogs, snakes, lizards, and occasional salamander hid themselves among the expanse of land I was working.

With each new project, the land opened up and I moved further away from the easily accessible. The grazing pasture photo points brought me to areas frequented by cattle over the past twenty years. The water catchments, inventoried by the Idaho Fish and Game, brought me up and through the overgrown two-track roads twisting around the hills and valleys. Many were obvious as ones that had been continually used, while others were hidden ditches in the ground leftover from a long history of cattle on the ranch.

The transects for vegetation monitoring brought me to points only discovered with the help of the GPS. One transect gave me my first rattlesnake

sighting. Others brought me a view of the entire 10,400 acres I was attempting to monitor, while simultaneously allowing me to look down with purpose at each individual species composing the mosaic of ecological sights.

My last project, walking along the fence lines to take inventory and check the condition, brought all the previous projects into clearer focus and allowed me to hold a more complete understanding of the rangeland I had been monitoring for three months. The photo points, water catchments, and vegetation transects were individual, but somehow the fence inventory became something cumulative of my entire summer.

On one of my final days on the ranch, I found myself up Long Gulch, an expansive canyon out of sight from the main road. Immersed in this landscape, I felt as though I was no longer just a short drive from Hailey. I walked along a broken fence, taking note of the fallen barbed wire beginning to be overtaken by the grasses and sagebrush.

I continued to walk up, becoming somewhat positive the fence line was infinite, when I came upon two nearly complete skeletons of, presumably, the last cattle to walk this line. The bones were bleached and unmoved. There was an occasional pelvic or leg bone out of place, but for the most part, the two skeletons stayed side by side. They had grazed the pastures, drunk from the water catchments and eaten the vegetation. They will forever be on the ranch and part of the landscape.

Morgan worked with the Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy as the Rock Creek intern this summer. She grew up in the valley, and is now a senior at Whitman College studying Environmental Humanities.



From the top: Morgan at work on the range.
Rock Creek Ranch ©JohnFinnell



Through Their

IMAGINE THAT YOU HAD TO NAVIGATE YOUR entire life looking through binoculars. You'd have a great view of the performers at the symphony in the summer—but you'd be tripping over the people, picnic baskets and lawn chairs right at your feet.

Welcome to the life of a pronghorn.

These amazing animals—which are more closely related to goats than to the antelope of Africa—evolved on the Great Plains of North America. As plains animals, they relied upon amazing distance vision to see and avoid their predators.

In today's landscape, their powerful vision can be more of a liability than an asset, especially as they navigate private land, and most importantly—fences. Pronghorn are powerful creatures. After all, they can run up to 60 miles per hour. But a fence brings them to their knees—quite literally. Because of their poor near vision, they can sense something is there—it's just hard to make it out well. Rather than risk jumping it (which can lead to them being caught up in the wire—with devastating effects), they prefer to crawl under.

This becomes incredibly important each winter and spring, as they begin their journey to and from wintering grounds. Pronghorn have to migrate. With their dainty hooves and shorter legs than elk or moose, they can't survive in much snow. Yet in the West, more than 75% of their historic migration routes have been lost to development.

Right now, the pronghorn from your own backyard are traveling up to 160 miles—one way—to join with one of the largest wintering herds in the state. Their journey takes them across a narrow band of mostly private land along Highway 20, a narrow seam tucked between the mountains to the north and Craters of the Moon to the south. This is the land that best supports their travel—open, rolling... and crisscrossed with fences.

This is where the Land Trust and its partners in the Pioneers Alliance come in. Fences can be modified to accommodate pronghorn. You can remove the bottom strand of barbed wire, or replace it with a strand of smooth wire that runs higher off the ground. When it is done strategically, it doesn't affect cattle operations, but allows pronghorn to ease



SEEING THE REALITY OF PRONGHORN MIGRATION

WHEN YOU LOOK at the whole region from the Pioneer Mountains to Craters of the Moon, you can see that this 2.4 million acre region is united by a narrow band of privately held land. This piece of land serves as the critical migration corridor for the pronghorn in your own back yard. Each year, they navigate roughly 160 miles to get to good winter range. **Your support is empowering ranchers and other land owners to make that journey a safe one.**

Eyes

Fences create a bottleneck and are dangerous obstacles to migrating pronghorn.
©Joe Riis

under the fence and continue on their journey. The landowners throughout this region are making just these types of modifications to their fences—or electing to remove fences altogether. Through their participation in the Alliance, they’ve learned the importance of this migration route to our local pronghorn herds, and they’ve been able to apply for funds to make modifications that can truly save these animals’ lives.

Prior to the last ice age, there were 13 different species of pronghorn. Our pronghorn today were the only species to survive. Through your support, you’re ensuring that humans won’t serve as their next cataclysmic event. You’ve helped create a collaboration that brings together a very diverse group of players, allows them to recognize their common interests, and inspires them to work together to protect this remarkable animal.

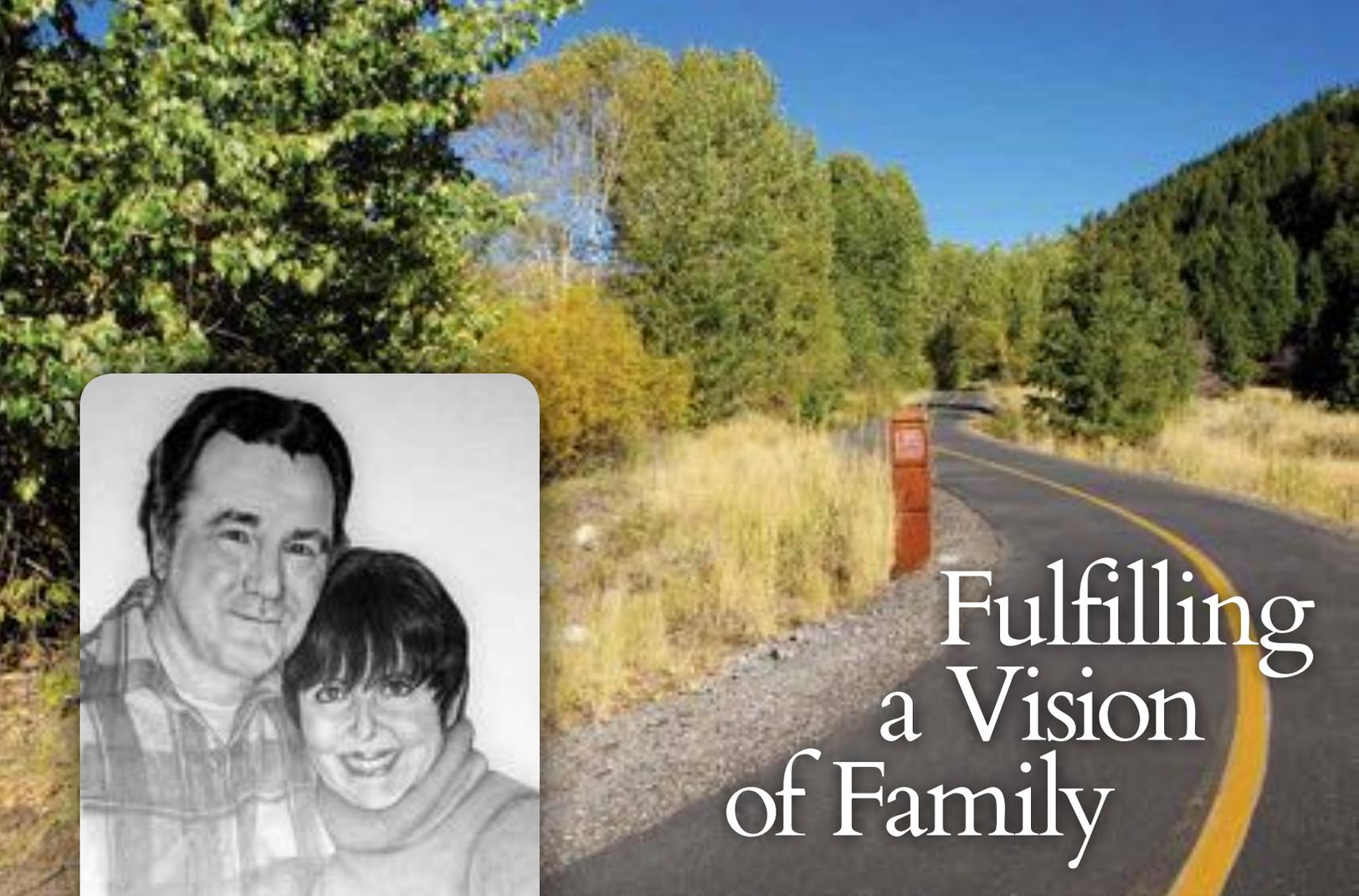
To read more about the Pioneers Alliance, all of the partners, and other projects they have completed, visit our new website:

www.WoodRiverLandTrust.org



WHY 60?

Pronghorn can maintain sprinting speeds of up to 60 miles per hour. The question is—why? Turn to page 13 for the answer.



Fulfilling a Vision of Family



Above; bottom right: Elkhorn Creek is hidden from view along the bike path. ©John Finnell;
Left: Portrait of Hal and Sharon sketched by daughter Lori shortly after the family settled
in the valley; Bottom left: Hal and his children, Jeff, Cyndi DuFur, and Lori at the site.

“IT ALL BEGAN WITH THE MOVIE HEIDI.”

When you hear Hal McNee share the story of his life with Sharon, you quickly realize there are thousands of stories and starting points wrapped up in their 55 year marriage. Today, he settles on the children’s movie as the framework for their life of adventure.

“As a young girl, Sharon saw the movie Heidi, and from then on, she dreamed of living in the mountains, surrounded by beauty.” This was quite a passion for a young girl growing up in suburban California. Though it took decades, Sharon ultimately achieved her goal. But she and Hal lived a lot of life before making their way to the Wood River Valley.

“I met Sharon at Ventura High School,” shares Hal. “I’d just graduated over in Ojai, and a school friend had transferred to Ventura. I’d go there to visit her, and spend time on campus. One day, I looked

up and there was this beautiful young lady bouncing around with a ponytail. We both later ended up with classes together at Ventura College, and the rest unfolded from there.”

“The rest” includes an elopement, followed by a honeymoon spent camping in Yosemite. It encompasses degrees earned at UCLA, three children, and careers begun in Los Angeles, and then again in Phoenix, and then San Diego.

It was there in San Diego, thirty years ago this fall, that Sharon decided it was time to engineer the childhood vision she’d held for her family. “Sharon had, of course, always wanted to pursue a life in the mountains,” recalls Hal, “and she was compelled to find a better environment for her children.”

They’d visited Sun Valley before, and so included it on the journey they made around the west in 1985. The goal—to find a vacation home. Hal recounts, “we spent time here, and just loved it, but we had

THE ELKHORN CREEK RESTORATION

IF YOU'VE WALKED OR BIKED along Elkhorn Creek just north of Lane Ranch, you know there are places where you can barely see the creek. The creek has very steep banks due to the berm that was built when it was channelized. Because of the berm, the whole riparian corridor is very unnatural—you go from water to a couple cottonwoods to sagebrush.

You'll see both of these problems addressed by this restoration. We'll remove the berm, re-shaping the stream banks so that the ground slopes more gently down to the water. Then we'll add a wider, more natural transition zone, preserving the trees, but adding willows, dogwoods, and native grasses.

The first half of the project is slated for this month—it requires a hard freeze so the excavating equipment can move across the land and bike path without doing any damage. If the weather cooperates, we'll do some planting and seeding in November, with additional plantings this spring.

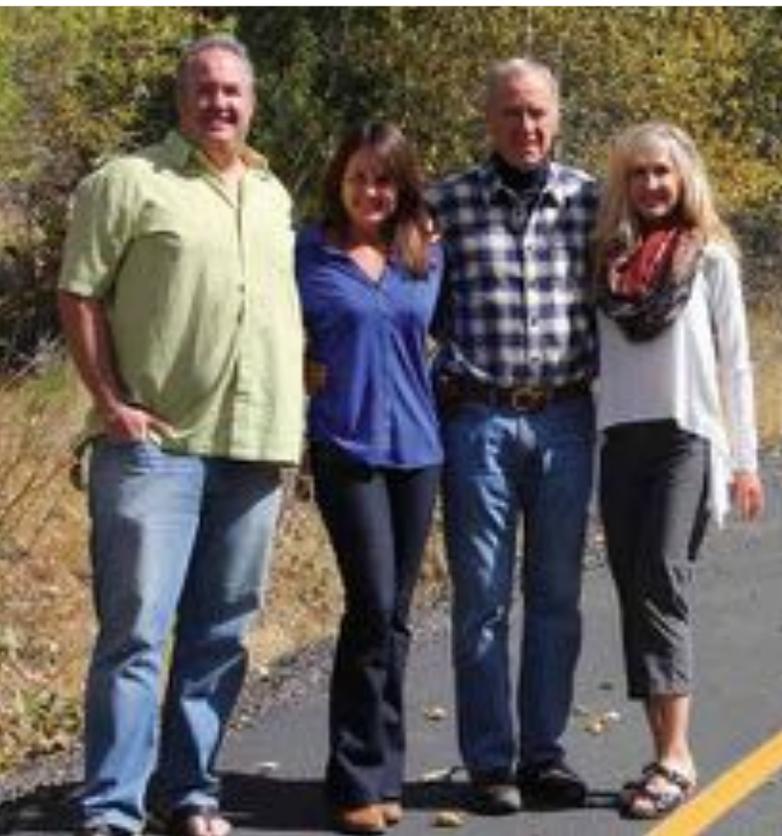
We can't wait to see you out on this newly invigorated trail—be sure to yodel a little thank you to the spirit of the young girl who fell in love with the valley while you're there.

other destinations we wanted to see. But by the time we got to Banff, everyone was asking to go back to Sun Valley—so we did. We bought a property in Sun Valley, and spent a wonderful Christmas vacation. When it was time to return to San Diego, I was the only one to leave. Sun Valley was our new home.”

For seven years, Hal commuted while the rest of the family settled into valley life. Ultimately, he and Sharon bought a home in Lane Ranch, and spent countless hours strolling the bike path, side by side. It was those memories that inspired Hal to approach the Land Trust about a project in Sharon's honor.

“It's been a little over two years since Sharon passed away, just shy of our 55th anniversary,” Hal says, with the same quiet passion with which he has shared their story. “She was my great friend, the love of my life, and she had a wonderful vision of family. She created our adventures—I got to come along for the ride. That all of our family lives here is really a testament to her. And together, we wanted to honor her memory.”

Hal had partnered with the Land Trust before, on a project at Willow Creek. “Because of my history with the Land Trust, it made sense to work with them again. After visiting with Scott about the possibilities, we decided to make Elkhorn Creek our tribute. It was an area that meant so much to Sharon and me. This is our family's expression of gratitude to Sharon, and the community that welcomed us. ”



33 newly protected acres of critical salmon habitat



Knapweed
plants removed:

9,146 (or so!)

Bark
spread on
preserve
paths:
60
cubic yards



The Year in Review

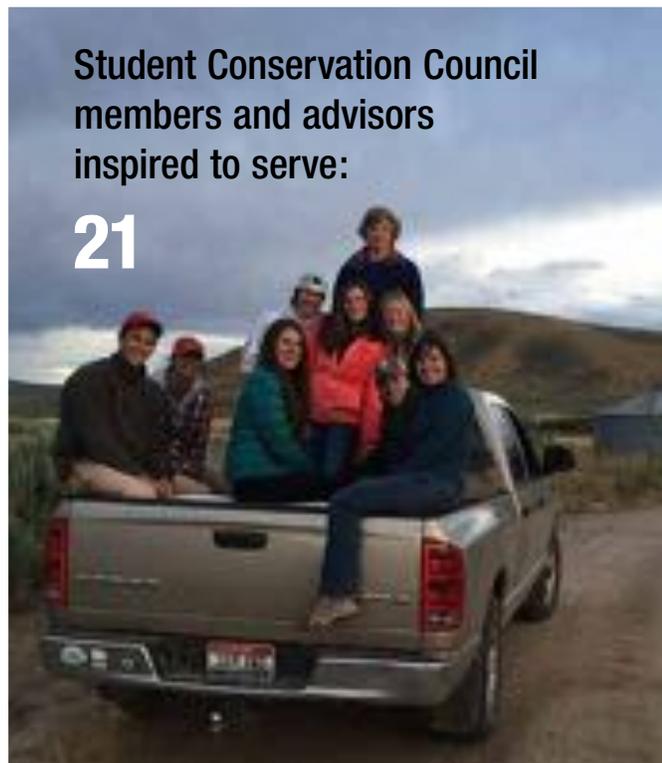
Total acres cared for:

608 newly protected acres of working farmland



Student Conservation Council
members and advisors
inspired to serve:

21



Scoops of ice cream served: **350**



380

inner tube rides down
the Big Wood River



Dog waste bags distributed:

4,100



You've protected and cared for the land. You've joined the work and celebrations—including the First Annual 4th of July RiverFest. Here are the highlights from everything you've made possible!

Beneficial
insects
released:

400



Total
participants
and volunteers
in community
programs:

2,251

25,184

Smiles shared
—countless



Square feet of invasive Reed Canarygrass burned:

14,000



Hot dogs eaten: **1,100**

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\$25,000 or more

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Thank you to each of you who contributed between April 1, 2014 and March 30, 2015. Your generosity is protecting the places you love, and the special character of the Wood River Valley.

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Visitors place rocks on Heart Rock Tree in Draper Preserve





Long Eared Owl Below Magic Dam ©John Finnell

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Bow Bridge ©Dev Khalsa



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Male Pronghorn ©John Finnell

WHY 60?

We bet you're thinking "to avoid predators"—and you're probably thinking that it is a pretty obvious answer. If so, you're right... but. The pronghorn's predators include coyotes, wolves, and bears, which have running speeds that top out at about 35–40 mph. So what's the sense in running 60 mph? Turn to page 18 for more.

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We work hard to make sure these listings are accurate. This year, we moved to a new database, which inevitably results in a little lost information. If we've made a mistake, please accept our apologies. We'd be grateful if you'd let us know so we can fix it for the future. Thank you!

Donations are often made to the Land Trust in recognition of individuals who have made a significant impact on the lives of others. These gifts create a lasting tribute to friends and loved ones by helping to protect and restore the beauty and character of the Wood River Valley and surrounding areas.

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Fly Fisherman in Beaver Pond Boulder Mountains ©Todd Kaplan, 2014





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We are fortunate to have so many supporters in the community. We are grateful for the remarkable businesses, who demonstrate their commitment to this special place through their support of the Land Trust. And we celebrate the volunteers who dedicate countless hours in leadership and work on the land. Thank you for protecting the places we all love!

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Counterclockwise from top: Keith Battista, volunteer, helps tubers safely into the water at RiverFest; Benny & Ray Bike ©Lisa Chambers; Volunteers in Draper Preserve

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Counterclockwise from top left:
Fall colors on Ramey Creek,
Copper Basin ©Todd Kaplan;
Pronghorn doe and fawns
on fleet feet ©John Finnell;
Friends of the Howard Preserve
dedicate countless hours every
year to keep the Preserve
in top shape

WHY 60?

What did you come up with? The best clue we offered was in the main article, when we described the 12 species of pronghorn who didn't survive the last ice age. There was another animal that succumbed to that event—the North American cheetah. The speed we see in today's pronghorn is an evolutionary relic from a time when they truly had to run 60 mph to escape this predator. Congrats if you knew the answer!



Leadership



This newsletter is published by
WOOD RIVER LAND TRUST
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Hailey, ID 83333
Tel: 208-788-3947
Fax: 208-788-5991
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WRLT is a public benefit Idaho company and is tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Our Tax ID# is 82-0474191. Contributions to WRLT are tax-deductible as allowed by law. Public financial information is available on our website or by contacting our office.

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©Matt Leidecker
Back Cover: Church on Sunday,
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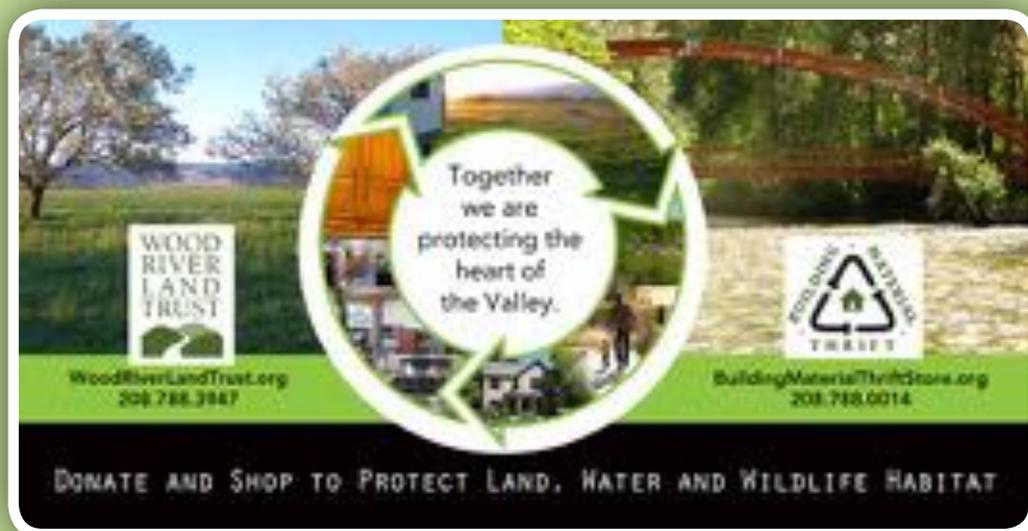
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*Wood River Land Trust
protects and restores land,
water, and wildlife habitat
in the Wood River Valley
and its surrounding areas.*

*We work cooperatively
with private landowners
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to ensure these areas are
protected now and for
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