

PROTECTING WILD SPACES & HAPPY PLACES

WOOD RIVER LAND TRUST

SUMMER 2020



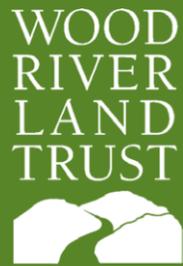
WOOD
RIVER
LAND
TRUST



**INSPIRED BY TOMORROW'S
CONSERVATION LEADERS**
Youth voices lead the way in the
local conservation movement

**FISHERIES AND
CLIMATE CHANGE**
Keeping fish populations
healthy as we live through a
changing climate

ACCESS FOR ALL
Creating a place for all
members of our community
to experience this place we
call home



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A LETTER FROM

SCOTT BOETTGER

This summer has been different than what I'd imagined. After 23 years at the Land Trust, I was going to be on sabbatical, researching the historic trout genetics of the Big Wood, catching up on home projects, and going on one "last" vacation with my kids before my daughter went off to college.

Much of my research was interrupted by COVID closures, some of my home projects progressed (although few were finished), and our family trip had to be cancelled. But, a once in a lifetime project came up during my sabbatical – the protection of Warm Springs Ranch (also known as the Ketchum Dog Park).

Warm Springs Ranch in Ketchum has become one of our community's most treasured places. Many of us remember fondly the "old Ketchum" charm of the restaurant and the funky 9 hole golf course. Too much of what made Ketchum such an enjoyable and charming place is gone. But somehow through all these years the Warm Spring Ranch remains open and is yet again a place for our community to come together and enjoy the beauty that surrounds us, albeit as a dog park now.

But the property can and should be much more than a dog park. Since the property sold this spring, we've been working with the new owner to try to come up with a deal to acquire, restore and protect the open space and recreational opportunities of the property for the community. We believe the most impactful conservation happens when we create win-win-win solutions that meet the needs of the landowner, the community, and future generations. We've seen this time and again over the past 26 years – with Quigley Canyon, the Hailey Greenway, the Howard Preserve, Rinker Rock Creek Ranch, and many more. We hope to see that play out with Warm Springs Ranch.

Many of the projects and stories in this newsletter are multi-year efforts. The only reason we're able to succeed at this long-ranging work is because of people like you. Your support ensures that there is always someone at the table looking out for our community, our river, and our future.

Thank you for being a part of this journey,

Scott Boettger, Executive Director



Scott with his daughter, Emily, on the South Fork of the Snake



INSPIRED BY TOMORROW'S CONSERVATION LEADERS



Work with the Land Trust!

The Wood River Land Trust posts a call for applications to fill our paid summer internship positions in February. If you know of anyone that would like to apply, keep an eye out for the position posting.

Youth voices lead the way in the local conservation movement

In a place like the Wood River Valley, it is easy to take open space for granted. Miles of trails to explore and countless mountain peaks to summit run throughout our community. Youth throughout the area have the opportunity to take advantage of the plentiful recreational opportunities the open space in our Valley creates, but are often disconnected from the conservation process.

Locally, young environmentalists find their place in the conservation movement here at the Wood River Land Trust through a summer internship. Their vision and passion lead their work while they spend time with us, and we continue to be inspired by them.

Owen Gifford, rising senior at Bowdoin College and Summer 2020 WRLT intern, returned home to give back to the land that gave him so much over the years. "I was born and raised in the Wood River Valley, which makes the work done for the Land Trust's internship all the more personal, prideful, and fulfilling."

Just like Owen, Samantha Busby, rising senior at Colorado State, was also born and raised in the Valley. Samantha's studies in Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology have framed her perspectives and influenced her career choices.

As she looks to the future of our Valley and the world, she reflects "I wish the weight of climate change was not on our shoulders but it is. We can't afford to wait for anyone else to fix it. Gen Z, you are powerful, you are the voice of change, you are enduring, and this valley is here to support you. Keep fighting and keep moving forward. Together, not only will we save our valley, we will save the world."

Owen and Samantha give our team here at the Land Trust hope. We are hopeful that young people will rise to the occasion and be stewards of the land. Your support to the Wood River Land Trust fosters the next generation of conservation leaders. They are your legacy.



But as our climate changes, our fishery and our trout friends feel the effects. All of the water for the Valley comes from the Big Wood River aquifer – from the water we drink to the water we use to water our lawns and crops. The river and the underground aquifer are connected, so whether we water our gardens with canal water or well water, we are pulling from the same finite resource.

Increasing community demands for water, combined with changing precipitation patterns affects, the water levels in our river. As levels drop, the remaining water becomes warmer and the runoff pollutants are less diluted.

So what's a cold water species like the Rainbow Trout to do? Or, more importantly, what are we, as their allies going to do?

While this all may seem daunting, we know that our community can come together to face these global challenges with local solutions here at home. The human residents of the Wood River Valley can help native trout populations by taking concrete action with the Wood River Land Trust.

FISHERIES & CLIMATE CHANGE

“Back in the days, before we knew climate change and corona virus, winter was colder. [One] year the river froze and we ice skated [from Bellevue] to Hailey”

So remembered one of our community members, who submitted this memory of cold, frozen winters during our summer Riverfest Reimagined story collection program.

Our community is seeing the effects of a changing climate in our daily life. We are experiencing hotter and drier summers, lower water levels, intense wildfire seasons, and a change in traditional precipitation patterns.

These increased climate related pressures threaten the health of the Big Wood Fishery, and the beloved rainbow trout that call this Valley home.

Fishing is a part of our daily lives here in the Valley, and is part of our collective identity whether or not we have ever picked up a fishing rod. It is part of the economic engine of our home, and is the reason that so many of us choose to live here.





Photo: Michael Olenick

TOGETHER WE CAN KEEP WATER IN THE RIVER

We all use water from our aquifer, and we all share a deep connection to the river and understand that a healthy river means a healthy community. One of the ways that we can advocate for a healthy watershed is to bring all of the varying water users to the table to tackle the challenges facing our Valley.

The Wood River Land Trust, with our partner The Nature Conservancy, helps organize a group of diverse participants called the Wood River Water Collaborative. The many stakeholders in this collective include private citizens, water agencies, non-profit organizations, private interests and the public sector

The goals of the Wood River Water Collaborative are to create a long-term, practical water management framework that can provide new tools to help balance the needs of upstream and

downstream users. These water management tools would help ensure that there is enough water in the river for people, crops, fish, and wildlife now and in the future.

Advocating for the health of the river and the fish populations that depend on it takes time and resources. By becoming a sustaining member of the Wood River Land Trust, you are ensuring that we have a seat at the table during these important conversations about basin-wide water use. Your sustaining membership gives a voice to the wildlife that relies on a healthy watershed.

“Trout are resilient, as is our river and our community. We can modify our behaviors and become advocates and stewards for the health of our fishery.”

TOGETHER WE CAN COMBAT RISING WATER TEMPERATURES

When the river temperatures rise, trout look for a place to cool off. Luckily for them, healthy river systems contain cool creeks, crisp brooks, and chilly streams all known as tributaries. These little streams funnel down from the tops of the watershed into the main river channels, and generally stay much cooler than the main river channel.

The Wood River Land Trust is working across the region to connect tributary systems to the Big Wood River. By removing impediments, adding beaver mimicry structures to increase tributary health, and by working with partners to rethink dams, we are increasing the amount of tributary length that our trout populations can access. These threads of safety become increasingly vital as our climate warms.

You can help combat rising water temperatures in your own home by becoming a part of the Trout Friendly Program. By opting in to using less water in your landscaping (through smart watering practices or strategically replacing landscaping plants with drought tolerant and native species), you can help to keep water in the river, keeping the river cool. Even more critically, if you live along the banks of the Big Wood River, you can plant willows and shrubs that can cast shade over the river. A shady river is a cool river!

The Wood River Land Trust is proud to be part of a community that embraces collective action. You can take local action to keep our fishery resilient in the face of climate change by becoming a member of the Wood River Land Trust; supporting our work in the Water Collaborative; or joining the Trout Friendly Program. More information on all of these actions can be found at woodriverlandtrust.org

ELEMENTS OF A HEALTHY RIVER

MEANDER

A meander is one of a series of bends and turns in a river channel, that increases the overall length of the river and reduces the speed of the water in the river.

DEBRIS

Debris piles create little patches of fertile soil, which facilitates the regrowth of vegetation, and provides diverse habitat for stream-side species.

GRAVEL BAR

Gravel bars are deposited as the river flows change over the years. They provide slow, shallow river habitats which are important for fish spawning.

RIPARIAN BUFFER

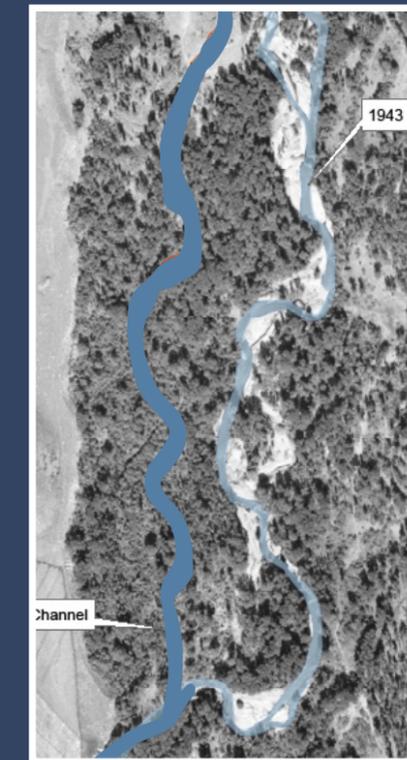
A healthy buffer of riparian plants helps stabilize the river bank and provides critical habitat for fish, birds, and other river wildlife.



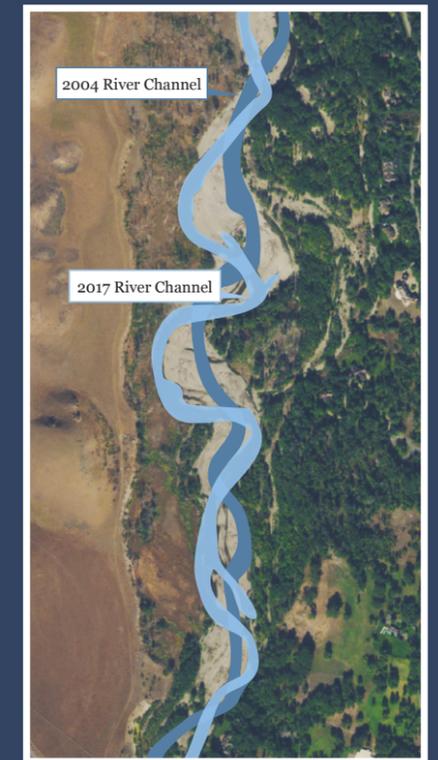
Reclaiming the River Chanel

Historically the river had space to meander, allowing it to wind 8,225 feet along one linear mile above Deer Creek Road. As development channelized the river, it straightened to a low length of 6,700 feet between the same two points. After the flooding in 2017, the river reclaimed some of it's footprint and increased to 7,739 feet.

When the river channel is allowed to meander, it becomes healthier. The sinuous bends help slow the river which allows it to deposit gravel bars, create more braids and side channels, which all help lead to a more vibrant fishery.



The image above shows the 2004 river channel compared with the historic 1943 river channel



The image above shows the 2017 river channel after the flooding compared with the 2004 river channel

PEOPLE MAKE CONSERVATION POSSIBLE

What does it take to turn an old agricultural field into a pollinator paradise? Lots and lots of hard work! Luckily, the community here in the Wood River Valley isn't afraid of rolling up their sleeves to help support local pollinators.

"[I volunteer] to help restore the environment to its former well being" says Donevin Lakey. She has been particularly keyed into this project this spring, volunteering over 6 hours of her time! Donevin has loved seeing the mono-culture of the grasses in the former cow-pasture start to bloom with new pollinator species.

Donevin's father Kevin also came out to lend a hand. Kevin, the Water Master for our local water district has been volunteering with us to "learn different perspectives within the conservation community and to share knowledge" with others.

Kevin and Donevin are two of the many people who make our work possible. Over the last few months, 35 volunteers have donated a combined 120 hours of work. Our volunteer crews have done everything from getting our Colorado Gulch Pollinator Meadow planted to giving the Boxcar Bend Preserve fishing access trail a spring cleanup.

Our community is at the heart and soul of our work here at the Land Trust and we are so grateful for the hardworking volunteers who make it all possible.

“I volunteer to support an organization that directly improves the environment.”
-Anne Gifford



A PLACE TO CONNECT

With nature, family, and the Big Wood River

How old were you when you experienced the thrill of catching your own fish? For Ellie Loudon, that experience came when she was just seven years old.

"When we caught [the fish] it was so much slimier than I thought it would be!" Ellie exclaimed. Her father, Ehlán, nods and smiles "Ellie is such a tender kid, the thought of harming a fish she caught would devastate her."

Now that Ellie is ten years old, she better understands how to protect the fish she lands (with the guidance of her father). By always practicing catch-and-release, using barbless hooks, and "keeping them wet" she has found ways to enjoy fishing with limited stress to the fish she catches.

"It's important to me that we have healthy fish because me and my family come here all the time and I like touching them," explained Ellie.

Ellie and Ehlán were recently fishing at the Draper-Wood River Preserve in Hailey, catching some midday fish on their fly rods, while the rest of the Loudon family was playing on the beach. Six year old Ember was stacking rocks while her mom, Liza hung out and watched her family enjoy the beautiful scenery.

"I love this community space. Being able to walk down here from town, and spend an afternoon just hanging out with my family by the river - is there anything better?" Liza asks.

Part of the mission of the Wood River Land Trust is to preserve these treasured landscapes for generations to come. Getting kids hooked on fishing and encouraging them to explore their own backyard is critical if we want to engage the next generation of conservationists. Seeing Ellie and Ember out on the Draper Wood River Preserve is what we're all about.



Become a monthly member of the Land Trust to ensure that these special places are here for community members of all ages to create their next favorite memory.

ACCESS FOR ALL AT THE SUN PEAK PRESERVE

When you think of going into a natural space, what do you envision? Do you think of a rocky footpath, a log bridge, or navigating tree roots? For many, these natural features go unnoticed. Realistically, however, these features prevent some of our neighbors from readily accessing the outdoors. The average trail in the Wood River Valley is not accessible to a range of community residents: those in wheelchairs, the elderly, children in strollers, and many more.

Jeff Burley, Director of Adaptive Sports for Higher Ground Sun Valley, helped to shed some light on the barriers those with disabilities face in our valley. It immediately became apparent that Idaho has few opportunities and access points for those who need it; people with disabilities in the Wood River Valley are often “left in the dust” as they struggle to find accessibility in the outdoors, but he points out that “It’s not unwillingness, it’s just that we don’t think of it!”

The Wood River Land Trust has been working with the City of Ketchum, community members of the Hulen Meadows neighborhood, resident river enthusiasts, and community partners like Higher Ground. We’re designing a space at the Hulen Meadows Pond that can help create a profound connection to nature for people who traditionally can’t utilize the wild spaces throughout the valley. After a variety of public stakeholder meetings, the community came to a consensus that it is a priority to create options for amenities and access for persons with disabilities at the Hulen Meadows Pond.

Jeff Burley points to the unique opportunity that the Hulen Meadows Pond provides: “How many accessible places can somebody go paddle? ... There aren’t a lot of places here with such a good flow of water that are as safe and calm at the same time. This is right off the road, right off the bike path, so there are many ways to get there, and it’s not far from the fire department.”

The Wood River Land Trust has created three amenity concept plans focusing on better parking, ADA access to amenities like a viewing platform, restrooms, and picnic areas, and to reduce pedestrian conflicts with vehicular traffic. The plans will be reviewed by professionals that focus on designing amenities for persons with disabilities.

As we move forward with this project as a community, the Land Trust will go over the amenity concept plans with the public when it is safe to gather due to Covid-19 concerns.

Ryan Santo, Restoration Specialist for the Wood River Land Trust and project coordinator for the Sun Peak Preserve exclaims that “This is an exciting opportunity to provide access for all to enjoy the Hulen Meadows Pond and the Big Wood River!”

We know it is imperative that as a community, we look out for all of our members -- creating accessible spaces such as the Sun Peak Preserve is the perfect place to start. The Wood River Land Trust is excited to bring the magic of wild spaces and happy places to all members of our community.

“People don’t recognize the need for accessibility in the valley because they don’t see [persons with disabilities] out, but they are there.”

*-Jeff Burley,
Director of Adaptive Sports
Higher Ground*



WOOD RIVER LAND TRUST



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FOUNDERS' CIRCLE

Plan your legacy for the Valley

Create a lasting legacy with the Wood River Land Trust by making a planned gift for the future of our valley.

You may find your connection to the Valley through fond family memories, a hiking trail, a fishing spot or iconic views of the mountains. By giving to the Wood River Land Trust, you make a difference in protecting the Valley - its land and river and special character.

Making a planned gift through your will, insurance beneficiary designation, IRA beneficiary designation, or other vehicles like remainder trusts can have a big impact on our work here in the valley. If your estate plans include a gift to the Wood River Land Trust, please let us know so that we can thank you for your generosity, honor your wishes and recognize your impact as part of our Founders' Circle.

We are grateful to recognize the inaugural members of our newly created Founders' Circle in 2020:

David Anderson
Brooke Bonner
Barry Bunshoft
Kelly Curtis
and John Marsh
Ed Cutter
John and Daralene
Finnell
Maureen Groper

Tom Henderson
John Hill
Mike and Mary
Howard
Trish Klahr
Kingman and Cindy
Lambert
Kathie Levison
Sarah Michael

Robert Ordal
Rebecca Patton
and Tom Goodrich
Gail Severn
Gayle Stevenson
Barbara Thrasher
and Rick Koffey
Amy Trujillo
Roland Wolfram
and Patti Zebrowski