

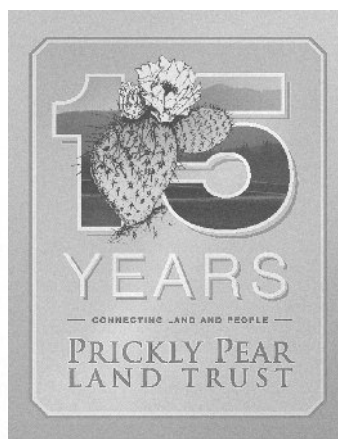


openviews

FALL 2010

What were you doing fifteen years ago? What job did you have? What kind of car were you driving? Did you have kids? Were *you* still a kid?

If you were around Helena back then you may have heard about a group of people that got together to figure out how to save a key piece of property near town. They didn't want to sue to save it. They couldn't afford to buy it. But they certainly were not going away.



What they did was create an organization based on cooperation and voluntary agreements with landowners. They became part of the growing land trust movement in the U.S.



Andy Baur

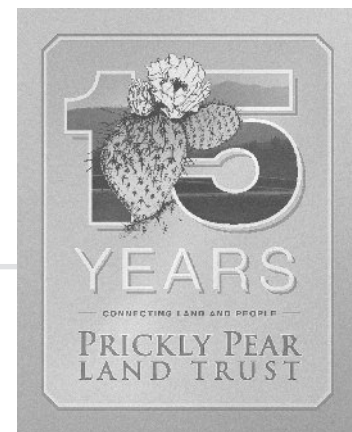


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Our mission is to protect the natural diversity and rural character of the Prickly Pear Valley and adjoining lands through voluntary and cooperative means. The Land Trust is dedicated to perpetuating the recreational, wildlife, scenic, agricultural and historic values of the land.

From the Ground Up:

PPLT is Fifteen!



PPLT GREW OUT OF the desire to create a grassroots, non profit organization to protect open lands for the community while providing potential benefits to cooperating landowners. In February 1996—with less than \$300 in the bank—PPLT's first leader, Jerry DeBacker, and its first board of directors fronted by president, Bill Schneider, set out to build such an entity. With advice and training from conservation professionals such as local conservationist Bob Kiesling, they stayed focused on acquiring lands and raising funds to accomplish their mission. They cooperated with a simultaneous effort to create an open space bond fund to help acquire and protect open space and ball fields. But mostly, they sought and gained support from the community to ensure their mission lived on. And live on it did.

Reviewing the minutes of PPLT's early board meetings is a window into an organization's hard-working acumen to grow and thrive. Its first project: a bargain acquisition of the 10-acre Waterline Trail parcel made possible through the generosity of long time supporter and former board member, Lisa Bay, along with Mary Musil, Lisa Roe and Beverly Magley, offered a key access to the Waterline Trail. PPLT still proudly owns this parcel today.

DeBacker worked as PPLT's sole employee for more than three years until the organization built enough capacity to hire Norane Freistadt as its first membership coordinator. Together with a dedicated board of directors, Jerry and Norane formed the foundation of PPLT's deep community roots—building membership, planning events and courting partner organizations—all while putting together the land deals and conservation easements that gave PPLT a seat at Montana's conservation table. Four conservation easements in the Elkhorn Mountains in the late 1990s and early 2000s represented PPLT's first foray into private land conservation.

IN 2001, PPLT ENTERED into a partnership that would solidify a new and lasting chapter in its history. One of the key elements to come out of the 1996 City Open Space Bond was the mandate to create an open space management plan and hire a trails coordinator. PPLT won the opportunity to

become the City of Helena's Trail Coordinator and as such hired its third employee under contract: Andy Baur. Baur's background in landscape architecture, planning and trail consulting were a good fit.

PPLT complemented the City's open space bond process perfectly. Its ability to raise needed funds to leverage the bond while offering tax benefits to donors was key in the completion of many bond projects such as Meatloaf Hill near Mount Ascension and the Swaney parcel addition to Mount Helena.

After setting the stage for success, Jerry DeBacker's departure with his family to New Zealand opened up the opportunity for PPLT to hire its first full time Executive Director in Fall of 2001. Baur's short tenure at the trails position and previous land trust experience was enough to land the job.

Since then PPLT has continued to prosper and grow. In the intervening years since 2001, PPLT has expanded its staff to meet

new challenges and opportunities. Norane became the first development director in 2002. An administrative position was added shortly after. Also in 2002, Emmett Purcell came on as the seasonal trail

volunteer coordinator—a position he still holds today. In 2005 the land protection coordinator was added to focus on private land conservation.

SO HERE WE ARE—fifteen years later—and so much to be proud of. An impressive list of accomplishments and four full time and one seasonal staff. (See side bar). We have secured trail corridors that link open lands. We have helped to nearly double the amount of City-owned open space lands to over 2,000 acres. We have protected 13 private land parcels through conservation easements (more than 3,200 acres!). And through the hard work and guidance of the board of directors and staff, we have garnered the trust and support of hundreds of members, numerous businesses, local, state and federal agencies, trail user groups and our fellow conservation organizations.

One thing we never forget is that it is you, our members, supporters and landowners that have made Prickly Pear Land Trust's success

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

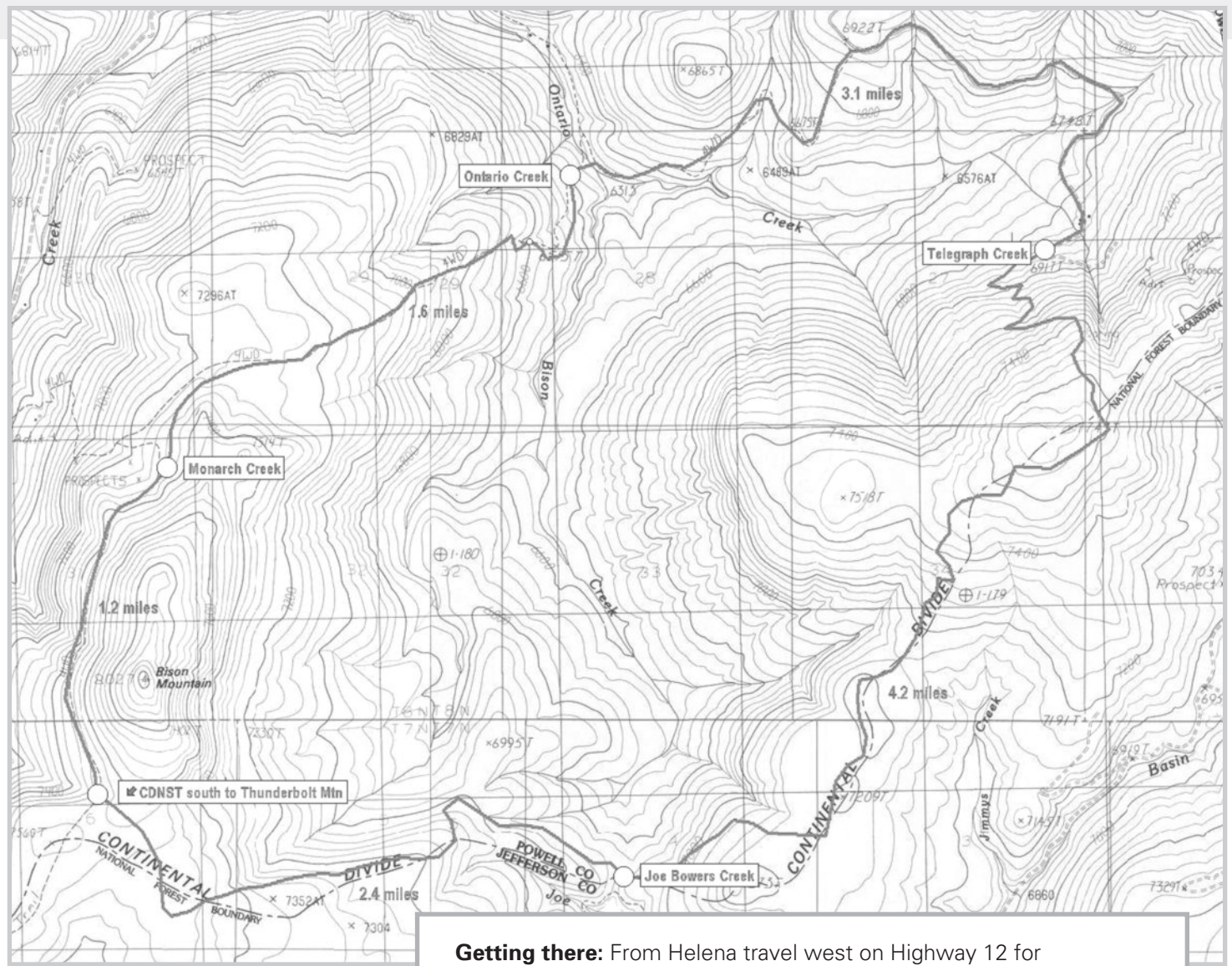
- 1995** December, PPLT receives its non-profit status.
- 1996** February, PPLT holds its first Board of Directors meeting.
- 1998** Facilitated the transfer of 119 acres from the Bureau of Land Management to the City of Helena for its parks.
- 1998** Purchased a 10-acre parcel, and in cooperation with the Helena National Forest and our volunteers developed a public trail that provides access to the Waterline Trail.
- 1998** Received a gift of a 122-acre parcel in the South Hills. This property was protected with a conservation easement, then resold to a conservation buyer retaining a scenic public trail corridor.
- 1999** Protected with conservation easements more than 469 acres of prime wildlife habitat in the North Elkhorn Mountains.
- 2000** Completed the acquisition of 173 acres on Mount Ascension and 15 acres atop Meatloaf Hill. These properties were then transferred to the City of Helena for its parks.
- 2001** Began serving as Trail Coordinator to the City of Helena. PPLT has since hosted numerous trail workdays and performed trail maintenance and construction on Helena's trails.
- 2001** Collaborated with Montana Audubon, the Mikal Kellner Foundation For Animals and the City of Helena to acquire 2.5 acres of wetlands in the Helena Valley.
- 2001** Facilitated the purchase of 40 acres at the crest of Bompert Hill. This property was then dedicated to the City of Helena for its parks.
- 2002** Secured 5 acres on Mt. Ascension for the City of Helena to allow for a trail connection to Bompert Hill.
- 2003** Purchased the 457-acre Spring Hill Claim Block just south of downtown Helena. Received a gift of several lots on Quarry Hill with important trail connections to Mt. Ascension trails.
- 2004** Secured a conservation easement on 75 acres of prime winter elk habitat adjoining state lands west of Helena.
- 2004** Produced a trail map of the South Hills of Helena, showing the trail network on City of Helena parklands and the Helena National Forest.
- 2004** Facilitated the acquisition of the Swaney Parcel by the City of Helena, 13 acres of highly developable lands adjoining Mt. Helena City Park.
- 2005** Added a full-time Land Protection Coordinator to staff, allowing increased focus on PPLT's private voluntary land protection program.
- 2005** Received the gift of two 1-acre buildable lots adjoining the Swaney Parcel, which was subsequently added to the Mt. Helena City Park.
- 2005** Secured a conservation easement on a 117-acre parcel protecting the scenic and wildlife values of the Mt. Helena Ridge just south of Helena.
- 2005** Secured conservation easements on 251 acres of prime elk habitat adjoining the Helena National Forest and BLM lands in the Elkhorn Mountains.
- 2006** Transferred 301 acres of the Spring Hill Claim Block to the Helena National Forest.
- 2006** Purchased 40 acres on the summit of Mt. Ascension for inclusion in Helena open space.
- 2006** Became the fiscal and administrative sponsor for the Montana Association of Land Trusts and hired its first Executive Director. www.montanalandtrusts.org
- 2007** Led the Heritage Lands Working Group process to create a plan of action to preserve open and working lands throughout Lewis & Clark County
- 2007** Purchased two key parcels at the base of Mount Helena to secure trail access.
- 2008** Co-hosted the first High Divide Trails Jamboree to work on creating new single track trail on the Continental Divide Scenic Trail near Bison Mountain. The Jamborees continued in 2009 and 2010 to complete the new 12.5 mile Bison Mountain Loop Trail.
- 2008** Led effort to get the \$10 million Lewis & Clark County Land, Water & Wildlife bond measure on the 2008 ballot. The measure passed. PPLT is a technical advisor to the Open Lands Citizens Advisory Committee.
- 2008** Purchased 45 acres on Mount Ascension to be included in public open space, protecting a portion of the popular Entertainment Trail.
- 2008** Secured a conservation easement on an historic 1,500-acre ranch near Mullan Pass that has incredible wildlife habitat.
- 2009** Secured a conservation easement on a 670 acre ranch near Wolf Creek, protecting this working ranch forever.
- 2009** Transferred the remaining 157 acres of the Spring Hill Claim Block to the Helena National Forest.
- 2009** Protected an additional 20 acres of Mount Ascension to be included in City of Helena's public open space and protecting a portion of the Entertainment Trail.
- 2009** Facilitated a land exchange of seven acres, enabling the extension of the Far East Trail and connectivity to the Eddy McClure Trail.
- 2010** Acquired an additional 21 acre parcel to further protect the City's backdrop and another portion of the popular Entertainment Trail. This was PPLT sixth acquisition in this area.
- 2010** Transferred ownership of 131 acres to the City of Helena for inclusion in the City's Open Lands

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Bison Mountain Loop Completed

PICKING UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF after a wildly successful trail work weekend in June, an intrepid volunteer crew headed back up to Bison Mountain to put the final touches on the new Bison Mountain Loop Trail just south of the Little Blackfoot River. The group focused on rerouting a section of steep and eroding fall-line trail into a more sustainable and enjoyable route for hikers, bikers and equestrian users.

This trail work day was the fourth in a series of events hosted by the High Divide Trails Partnership (HDT) which was highlighted in previous editions of *Open Views*. HDT is a diverse group with representatives from bicycle groups, backcountry horsemen and conservation groups including PPLT. HDT's newest partner, the Continental Divide Trail Alliance, has been instrumental in funding and organizing these events.



Getting there: From Helena travel west on Highway 12 for approximately 20 miles (over MacDonald Pass). Just prior to entering Elliston, turn left on Little Blackfoot Road No. 227. Travel approximately 5 miles on road No. 227 until the junction with Telegraph Creek Road No. 495. Follow signs for Telegraph Creek to the left for approximately 10 more miles to the trailhead (primitive, but a new kiosk will be installed next season).

ALTERNATIVELY: Instead of going up Telegraph Creek, stay right on Road #227 (Little Blackfoot road towards Kading) until you reach a FS sign for Ontario Creek Road on the left. Follow Ontario Creek road for approximately 3 miles. (High clearance vehicles recommended on this road.) Follow the road all the way to FS road 4104A (gated, signed, closed to vehicles). You will have travel by bike, foot or horse about 1.7 miles to access the loop.

The challenging 12.5 mile Bison Mountain Loop connects existing sections of the Continental Divide Scenic Trail, many of which were rebuilt by High Divide volunteers over the past three seasons. Sections of this new loop were either non-existent or on rutted old roads. Now, sublime new single track trail makes for an enjoyable outing whether you choose two wheels, four hooves, or comfy boots to get you there.



Shannon Freix

The volunteer crew on Bison Mountain

PPLT Secures Another Mt. Ascension Parcel

BUILDING ON THE SUCCESS of the Backdrop Initiative, PPLT has just secured its sixth lot on the summit ridge of Mount Ascension. With the help of a grant from Montana FWP's Recreational Trails Program, PPLT closed on this 20 acre acquisition on September 24—an accomplishment celebrated the following evening at PPLT's Harvest Moon Banquet.

This lot is significant because it is another step towards protecting the coveted Entertainment Trail—the ribbon of single track that packs

incredible 360 degree views of our corner of the world. Additionally, the protection of this parcel also helps to further our efforts to preserve the stunning views and visual integrity of Helena's iconic southern skyline.

While we are so fortunate to have six lots—more than 150 acres—protected, we cannot stop now. We are actively working on five additional parcels to complete our first phase of the Backdrop Initiative. When complete, this project will have prevented twenty-two homes (and associated roads

and outbuildings) from being built in our view-shed. Trails will connect to other protected areas and the elk that winter in this area will be secure.

But success will depend on our ability to raise funds to make these transactions a reality. Our members and partners have been so generous in getting us to this point and we are cautiously optimistic we can get to the finish line. Your continued support is always appreciated and will bring the day we can celebrate ultimate success that much closer.

The new acquisition helps to further our efforts to preserve the stunning views and visual integrity of Helena's iconic southern skyline.



Bruce Capdeville

The Generosity of the Cinnabar Foundation

Earlier this year, The Cinnabar Foundation awarded PPLT a grant to fund our general operations. Before we can receive their award, the grant must be matched dollar-for-dollar. This summer, we sent you a letter asking if you'd help us meet the goal and, in effect, have your donation doubled. We sincerely thank all who contributed to this appeal.

The Cinnabar Foundation is an important partner of Prickly Pear Land Trust. Over the years, they have provided \$57,000 to fund our operations. Our membership has matched every one of those dollars, which adds up to a tidy sum. The funding provided by The Cinnabar Foundation is for our general operations, which includes staff time. It's important to remember that every land transaction, whether an acquisition for public open space or a conservation easement, takes many hours to negotiate and to secure funding. The money provided by The Cinnabar Foundation goes directly to these costs and helps make our work possible. If you haven't contributed to the matching fund challenge, please consider doing so today and know you're not only doubling your donation, but helping to fund the critical work that makes land conservation possible.

The Land is Our Legacy

THE HELENA CIVIC CENTER was a happening place on September 25. PPLT hosted its annual Harvest Moon Banquet and Auction, and thanks to widespread community support, it was a

tremendous success! This year we offered a fabulous line up of auction packages that were 100% donated, allowing every penny of the winning bids to directly support the work of the land trust. On the block was

a one-of-a-kind quilt of the South Hills Trail Map and a trekking trip to Peru. Board President and renowned ceramicist Sarah Jaeger donated eight beautiful blue plates that sold not once, but twice! And the "Spampacking" backcountry camping trip was a hit! With enticing packages like this, we set a new record for the event—funding that will further our work of expanding and maintaining our fabulous trail system and preserving the open space and rural character of our area.

The incredible support of local businesses was a huge part of the success of the event. Because of the generosity of our corporate partners, the

entire cost of hosting the banquet was covered. This means the cost of admission, drink and raffle tickets, and all winning bids went where it counts—on the ground! We truly value the commitment of our corporate partners. When you're out and about, please remember that these businesses support a cause you believe in.

While we are grateful for a successful event, there is still work to do. We need to raise more than \$425,000 to secure the Entertainment Trail alone, not to mention other critical projects. Please keep this in mind when thinking about your year-end giving, and consider a generous gift to PPLT.

We extend a hearty thank you to the many, many people who made this event a reality. Our hard working volunteers, our auction donors, our members and our guests all played a key role in the success of Harvest Moon. The banquet is a great night that makes a real difference. Thanks to those who attended and we hope to see you next year. Save the date—Harvest Moon 2011 will be held on September 24.

We extend a hearty thank you to the many people who made this event a reality.

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Andrea Ambrose | Chuck Magraw |
| Michele Bazzanella | Glenn Marx |
| Jenn Bezanson | Terry Marx |
| Clint Blackwood | George McCauley |
| Diane Boyd | Megan Moore |
| Mike Casey | Jon Morgan |
| Tammy Copenhaver | John Murray |
| Mark Copenhaver | Bill Nese |
| Steve Creigh | Sara Norcott |
| Candace Durran | Garrett Norcott |
| Mark Fowler | Dawn North |
| Barb Furlong | John North |
| Layna George | Jane O'Driscoll |
| Ann Gilbert | Maleen Olson |
| Jerry Grebenc | Bob Person |
| Debbie Grebenc | Mardell Ployhar |
| Jennifer Griggs | Robert Rasmussen |
| Mary Guokas | LeRoy Schramm |
| Jen Harris | Mary Schuller |
| Michele Herrington | Chelsea Segrest |
| Paula Jacques | Stuart Segrest |
| Patrick Cirillio | Rebecca Shaw |
| Sarah Jaeger | Joel Silverman |
| Peggy Johnson | Meghan Trainor |
| Art Keeler | Bob Walker |
| Betsy Burns | Sundi West |
| Carolyn Keller Blasch | Tom Likens |
| Jonathan Krauss | Emmett Purcell |
| Ann Mary Norton | |

We thank our Harvest Moon business sponsors

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- Luxan & Murfitt
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Another Successful Season of Trail Walks

Despite repeated challenges from our fickle summer weather, PPLT had another successful season of trail walks. Organized by the Membership and Outreach Committee, which is chaired by longtime board member Dawn North, these hikes are designed to introduce area residents to the extensive recreational opportunities offered by Helena's South Hills trail system and to the role PPLT plays in trail stewardship and local land protection.

Offered monthly throughout the summer, these hosted hikes are aimed at a variety of interests and skill levels. Walks included a celebration of wildflowers on Mount Helena in May, a nature scavenger hunt for kids on Nob Hill in June, a Geocaching outing on the front of Mount Ascension in July, an August exploration of new trails around the Mount Ascension summit, and an event in September specifically aimed

at introducing Carroll College students to the trails with a walk past the remnants of the "C" overlooking Helena.

The M&O Committee will soon begin planning for another season of local hikes. The trail walk schedule will be posted on PPLT's website (under 'Events') once they are scheduled. Watch for an outing that will fit your interests and join in the fun next year!

PPLT is Fifteen,

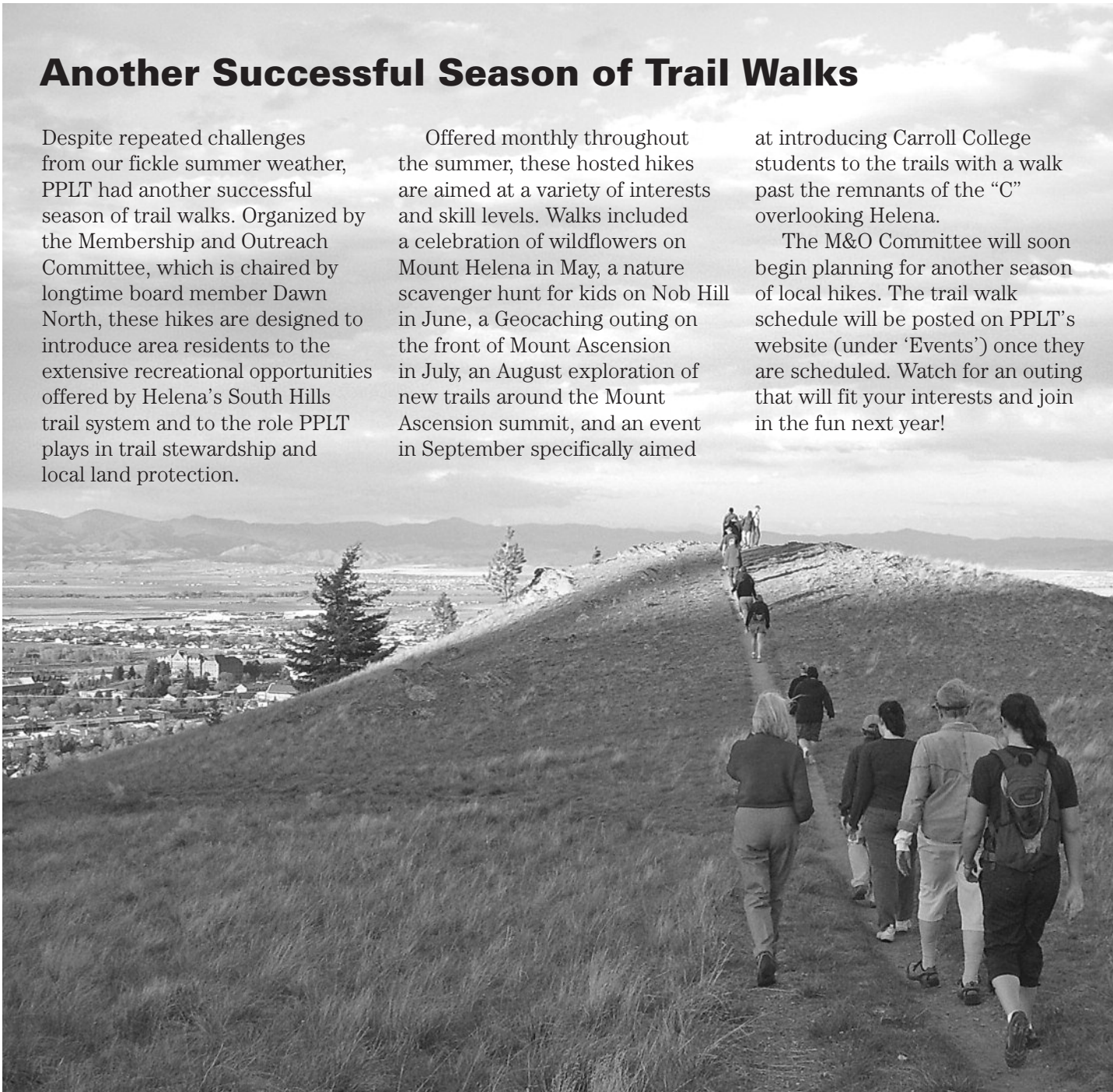
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possible. Every day that we are in business is because of the generosity of the people who feel that our work makes a difference in their community and in their lives.

NOW WE LOOK FORWARD

and we are ready to make the next step to take advantage of new opportunities and take on new challenges. In the coming year PPLT is poised to fill an even greater role in conserving the landscape that makes us so proud to live here. We are working to increase our ability to protect more agricultural lands, wildlife habitat, stream corridors and trail opportunities in places like the Helena Valley, the Boulder Valley, the Scratchgravel Hills and all the way up to the Great Divide and beyond.

To make this expanded mission possible, your help and support has never been more critical. We hope you will take a moment to reflect on what PPLT has meant to you over the past 15 years—whether it is the satisfaction you feel knowing that lands and trails in the South Hills are protected forever, or that key ranchlands with their open vistas and wildlife havens are secure. If those sentiments are something that you would like to see live on and grow in the future, we invite you to continue your commitment to our mission.



Joanne Martonik

Your License to Open Space

It's been a long time in the works but the PPLT license plate is out and ready to be on your car! When you renew your plates, be sure to ask for the PPLT plate. After a small one-time administration fee, 100% of the cost of the plate goes directly to support our work on conservation easements and trails. If the plate is not in stock, they can be ordered and you will receive a temporary tag until the plate arrives.

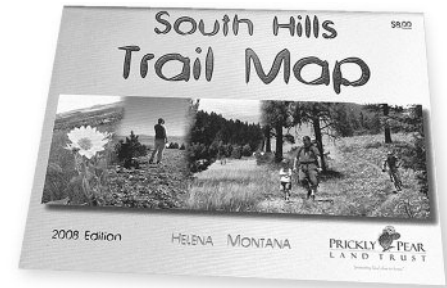
We also have customized PPLT "Open Views" license plate frames that are a perfect companion for your new plates! If you come into the office with proof you purchased the plate, you can get a frame for free or you can purchase one for \$5.

Consider Cactus Club

Did you know PPLT has an automated monthly giving program? We have several ways you can make an automatic donation of an amount of your choosing. This is a great way to keep your membership current and at the same time make a difference in our community through your consistent support of our work. Giving only \$10 a month makes you a \$120 annual giver! And that's a significant membership. If you give \$45 or more per month, you get an exclusive etched blue pint glass from Blackfoot River Brewing and 20 free pints! Now we're talkin'...a trail hike finished with a frosty pint! Please...make membership easy on yourself and sign up today.

PPLT Holiday Membership Package

The holidays are quickly approaching and there's no better gift than a membership to PPLT! From now through the end of the year, you can get a year-long membership, hat and map for just \$50—consider it a season pass to the trails for your friends and family.



Volunteers needed for the 2011 Don't Fence Me In

Don't Fence Me In 2011 is scheduled for May 14, 2011. We have a great committee of volunteers who start the planning process in late January but we are always looking for new people with fresh ideas to help. If you would like to play a key role in coordinating this ever-growing event, or just provide us with some feedback, please contact Joanne at joanne@pricklypearlt.org.



PPLT E-News Keeps You in the Loop

Stay informed about what's going on at PPLT by signing up for our e-mail list. You will receive timely periodic updates on projects, events, and volunteer opportunities. In addition we can let you know when the newsletter is online rather than receiving a paper version. If you are interested, send your email address to joanne@pricklypearlt.org.

