

SPRING/SUMMER 2019

# VIEWPOINTS



Flathead River Conservation Project photo by @TorrenceSummits.



**FLATHEAD  
LAND TRUST**  
Conserving Our Legacy of Land and Water

*"Show me a healthy community with a healthy economy and I will show you a community that has its green infrastructure in order and understands the relationship between the built and the unbuilt environment."*

*— Will Rogers*



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## OUR MISSION

*Flathead Land Trust is dedicated to the conservation of northwest Montana's land and water legacy through voluntary agreements with private landowners.*



# A Message FROM THE PRESIDENT



I'm sure that I am not the only one that is glad to see this winter finally over. February 2019 became the second coldest February in Montana since 1895. Flathead Lake froze. Scientists say that 90% of the lake was frozen and that is more ice than they've seen in 25 years. As I write this, I am sitting at my desk with the door open, looking outside at the trees budding with new spring growth. One week I was shoveling snow, the next I was mowing the lawn.

Warmer weather in the Flathead means more outdoor activity. It seems that every day there is some event from open air music to farmers' markets. Of course, there are outdoor activities including hiking, biking, camping, fishing, sailing etc. This is where the Flathead Land Trust comes into play. As I am sure you do, we treasure the Flathead's natural bounty, comforted by its open vistas and mountain splendors that both invigorate our lives and expand our freedoms.

Flathead Land Trust wants to ensure that future generations will have opportunities like ours to live, work and play on this rich landscape. To achieve this vision, we're going to need people on our side. People who love the land. Who act. Who give. Who vote. And to engage with people, we need to communicate and connect with the communities we serve.

There is increasing pressure to convert land, and land trusts need to swell the ranks of allies and supporters to meet these growing threats.

→ Yet, increasingly Americans are growing up without a strong connection to nature.

### WE NEED MORE LOCAL SUPPORT SO WE CAN KEEP SAVING LAND

→ Yet many people in our communities don't see conservation as important to them.

### WE NEED POLITICAL WILL TO ENACT THE LAWS THAT MAKE CONSERVATION POSSIBLE

→ Yet for many voters and politicians, conservation isn't a priority.

### WE NEED FINANCIAL STABILITY

→ Yet our strongest supporters aren't going to be around forever.

### WE NEED TO BE RELEVANT

→ Our supporters must reflect the diversity of the communities we represent.

During my tenure on the Board of Directors, the Flathead Land Trust has made significant strides in connecting with people of our community, through mechanisms such as this newsletter, Facebook, emails, and our own events including farmers' markets, Earth Day, Flathead River kayak tours, Summer Solstice Party, and our annual Land Affair fundraising event.

Great things are happening at the Flathead Land Trust, but there is always more to do. That's why when we think strategically about our goals, we come to this conclusion: We need to connect with more people. Take another look at our website, browse through the various links and see upcoming events, what's new, and recent accomplishments. Have a fantastic summer and get out and enjoy the amazing outdoors of the Flathead Valley.

Bill Corwin, Board President



# Community FISHING POND

## TO OPEN AT RIVER'S EDGE PARK IN COLUMBIA FALLS THIS SUMMER

Attention all kids, anglers, and families that love to fish - on June 18th, the River's Edge Park Community Fishing Pond in Columbia Falls will be open to the public. The pond will provide the community with a family friendly and accessible location for fishing and is the result of a collaborative community effort from Flathead Land Trust, the City of Columbia Falls, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and many others. The project was made possible with a large grant Flathead Land Trust and the City of Columbia Falls received from the LOR Foundation to work collaboratively to enhance the livability and build upon the strengths that make Columbia Falls unique. Additional funding was provided by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks through the Bill Kamps Memorial Fund as well as other sources. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has committed to stock the pond annually with native westslope cutthroat trout, while also promoting outdoor education and fishing activities.

River's Edge Park is a public park owned and managed by the City of Columbia Falls. The City is currently preparing a development master plan for the park which includes the new pond and other possible amenities such as a fishing pier, a perimeter path around the pond, benches, picnic tables, and a kiosk with native fisheries educational signage. The City, along with Flathead Land Trust and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks are working collaboratively to fundraise for the additional pond amenities. *For more information and to help guide the City's plans for the park, go to [www.cityofcolumbiafalls.org](http://www.cityofcolumbiafalls.org).*

Significant in-kind services were donated in order to make the pond project possible including: technical expertise and services from Sands Surveying and Applied Water Consulting; donation of an excavator to dig the pond and operator hours by Schellinger Construction; project and hauling coordination by Hamilton Excavating; and street cleaning services during the hauling process by JD Thinning.

## Please Join Us

**FOR A GRAND OPENING CELEBRATION WHICH WILL BE HELD ON TUESDAY, JUNE 18, FROM 4:00 – 7:00 PM**

Activities will include fishing, food, prizes, and a presentation to celebrate and thank everyone who had a part in creating the new pond for the community. River's Edge Park and the fishing pond are located on 5th Street East in Columbia Falls (east of Nucleus Avenue downtown, and just west of the Flathead River).

# North Fork CONSERVATION COMPLETED



“ *If I could revisit my beloved North Fork property in 100 years, I'd hope to see a resilient, sustainable forest and a welcoming refuge for diverse wildlife and birds. Granting a conservation easement on the property assures long-term stewardship of the property and a means of realizing my vision. That assurance means a great deal to me.*  
- Molly Shepherd

The North Fork of the Flathead River Valley is one of the most ecologically intact and wild river valleys of the lower 48 states where nearly all of the original species that existed prior to European settlement still roam the woods. At the close of 2018, a tract of those woods owned by Molly Shepherd was protected in perpetuity with the Flathead Land Trust to ensure that they continue to serve as exceptional wildlife habitat and open space.

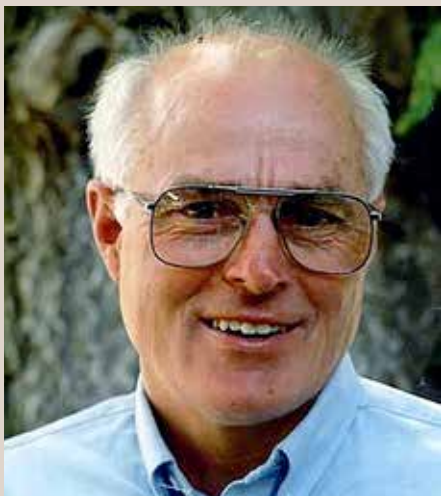
The 78-acre forested property near Trail Creek sits on a bench and contains seasonally wet areas that are visited by moose, bear, mountain lions, wolves, lynx, elk, fox, at least 80 documented migrant bird species and numerous other wildlife. Shepherd had the property certified as a Family Forest by the American Forest Foundation in 2014.

The Flathead Land Trust has 386 acres of private land in the North Fork conserved through conservation easements and has helped to conserve an additional 1,112 acres in the area through partnerships. Flathead Land Trust is working to conserve an additional 30 acres near Polebridge this year.



Molly on her newly conserved North Fork property. Photo courtesy of Molly Shepherd.

# Remembering FLATHEAD LAND TRUST LEADER Richard Kuhl



This spring we lost a one-of-a-kind leader for conservation. Richard served on the Flathead Land Trust board from 2012-2016 and served as president for two of those years. His life was defined by his passionate and benevolent service to causes he believed in. Richard had a deep love of nature and an endless devotion to the conservation of wild places.

Richard grew up in New Jersey but came west as a young man to work for the Forest Service in Idaho and Montana fighting forest disease and wildland fires, running timber surveys, and building trails. He met his wife, Marylane Pannell, at the University of Montana and together they moved to Kalispell. Richard then continued to live a life in the outdoors as a wilderness ranger at Moose Creek Ranger Station deep in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. His two children, Kendra and Walker, also got the chance to experience this world as

they spent their early years at Moose Creek in the summers. After a career in the Forest Service, Richard became a math tutor at Flathead High School where he helped many students understand a difficult subject.

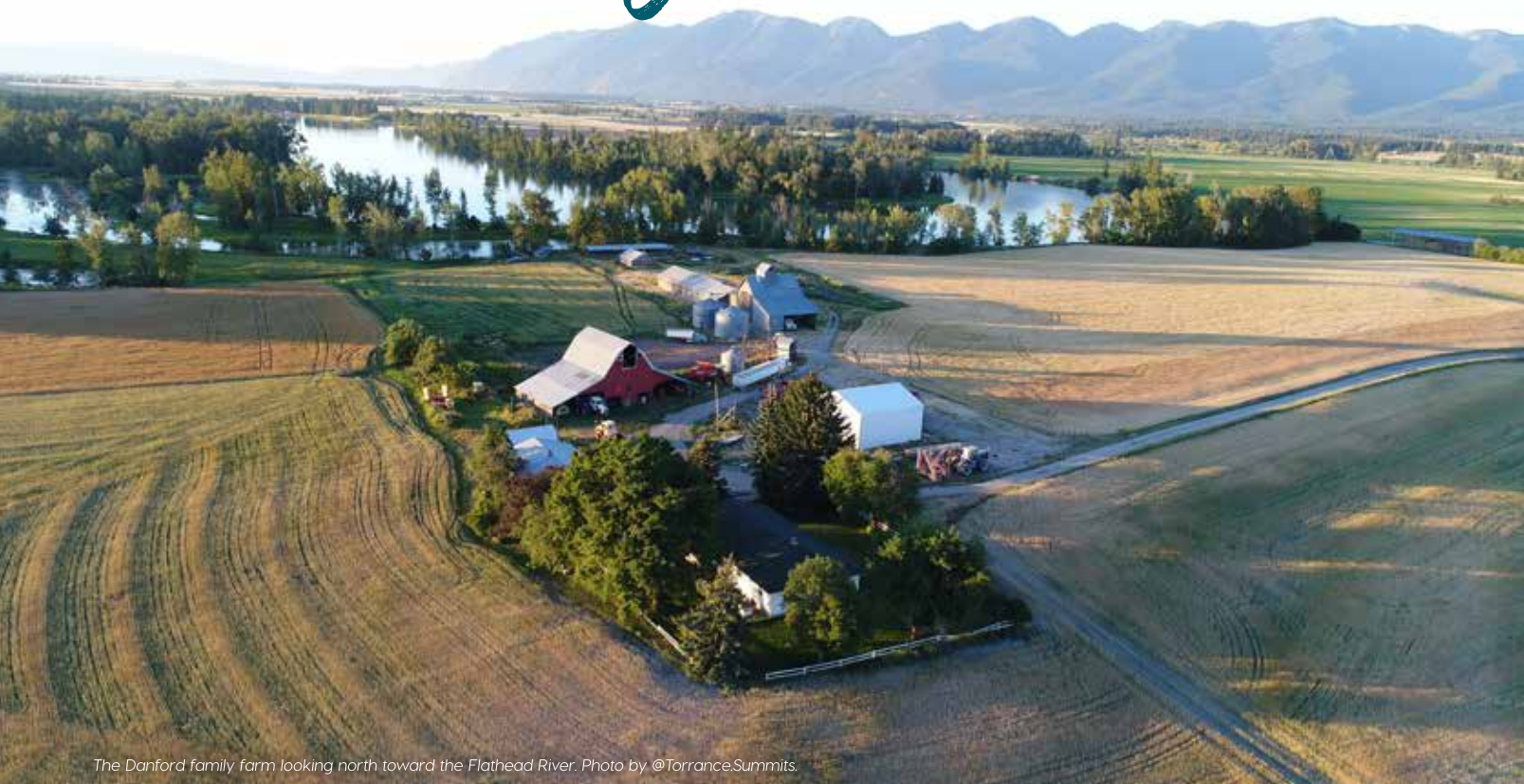
Richard set the highest example for giving back to what was important. He was a tireless volunteer and advocate in his community for the Montana Wilderness Association, Flathead Audubon, Friends of Lawrence Park, Flathead Democratic Party, Friends of the Library, and Flathead Land Trust. Richard helped Flathead Land Trust immensely. His strength and ability to lead us had to do with his tenacity, and his ability to put words into action. He was never afraid to put in the work to ensure we kept progressing forward to better fulfill our mission.

He was a true leader and champion of conservation because he cared and turned that care into action. The best way to honor the memory of Richard is by doing something that matters. Actively participate and make a difference in whatever cause you believe in.

## Thank You Richard

For teaching us this incredible life lesson, and for your commitment to conservation of our wild and wonderful places.

# Conserving the Heart



The Danford family farm looking north toward the Flathead River. Photo by @TorranceSummits.

We live in an incredible place here in the Flathead. Our high quality of life stems from many things, but none so important as our waterways such as the Flathead River and Flathead Lake. The Flathead River, which includes the Wild and Scenic designated North, Middle, and South Forks, is world-renowned for its native fish habitat, water quality and unsurpassed recreation.

**FLOWING FROM ITS HEADWATERS IN GLACIER NATIONAL PARK AND THE BOB MARSHALL WILDERNESS COMPLEX INTO FLATHEAD LAKE, THIS BLUE RIBBON AT THE HEART OF OUR LANDSCAPE FEEDS THE LARGEST FRESHWATER LAKE IN THE WESTERN UNITED STATES WHICH IS ALSO ONE OF THE CLEANEST LAKES IN THE WORLD.**

While we may think about this good fortune periodically, few understand the role that long-time farmers in the Flathead Valley have had in maintaining the integrity of our Flathead River system. Bob Danford and his family have been farming their rich soils in the lower Flathead for almost 100 years. Bob and his family have quietly been producing food and helping to steward the natural resources of our valley. Their 155-acre family farm borders a third of a mile of the Flathead River. Its 33 acres of wetlands and riparian areas are important for healthy

river function and are natural filters keeping our water clean. Their land provides critical habitat to a diversity of wildlife and birds including thousands of waterfowl during their migration. Together with other farms along the Flathead River and north shore of Flathead Lake, a network of important lands exists protecting our ecological resources and quality of life as we know it, perhaps rather precariously.

It is hard to make a living farming these days. With the population of the Flathead booming, the prospect of selling farmland for development is enticing, if not necessary for some. The lower Flathead Valley in many locations is quickly being converted from prime farmland and critical wildlife habitat to residential development. Before our very eyes, we're losing more and more of the land and its agricultural, scenic and conservation value forever. However, there is a conservation option that provides farmers compensation for keeping their rich farmland in agriculture perhaps providing enough financial benefit to allow them to keep their land in farming. With a purchased conservation easement the landowner continues to own and manage the land with the assurance that when the land is sold it will continue to be available as open space for agriculture and keep important areas such

# of the Flathead Valley



as wetlands and riparian habitat protected and intact. Flathead Land Trust is currently working to purchase a conservation easement on the Danford property, known as the "Flathead River Conservation Project". We have secured a large federal grant for \$513,000 from the Natural Resource Conservation Service contingent on we raise \$128,250 in non-federal matching funds. We have only \$53,000 left to raise to bring this important project to fruition.

Once funding has been secured and the conservation easement is in place, The "Flathead River Conservation Project" will also add to a larger landscape of conserved private and public land totaling 12,000 acres along the lower Flathead River and north shore of Flathead Lake.

## **BUT WE NEED YOUR HELP. HERE ARE THREE WAYS YOU CAN MAKE THIS IMPORTANT CONSERVATION PROJECT POSSIBLE.**

Bid on a beautiful hand painted paddle with our Battle for a Paddle online auction. The paddles were painted by well-known Flathead Valley artists including Nancy Cawdrey, Colt Idol, Nick Oberling, James Corwin, Kenneth Yarus, Susan Guthrie, Lonnie Collinsworth and Joe Bottomly. Each paddle is unique depicting scenes of the Flathead

River system as well as fish and wildlife of northwest Montana. The online auction will continue through June 21st, coinciding with the Summer Solstice Party. Auction winners of the paddles will be announced at the event.

**To view the paddles and access the online bidding site, go to: [www.auctria.com/auction/battleforapaddle](http://www.auctria.com/auction/battleforapaddle).**

The Summer Solstice Party will be hosted by Flathead Land Trust and the Flathead Lakers on June 21st at Hormuth's Rivers End Ranch along the north shore of Flathead Lake. Enjoy an evening of live music, food, and fun to help celebrate the longest day of the year and raise funding needed to complete the Flathead River Conservation Project. Live music will be provided by Mike Murray and Chris Krager and food by Somers Bay Café. Beer and wine from the Mission Mountain Winery and Flathead Lake Brewing Co. will be available at a cash bar.

**For information about the Summer Solstice Party or to buy tickets, go to: [www.flatheadlandtrust.org/event/summer-solstice-party](http://www.flatheadlandtrust.org/event/summer-solstice-party).**

**You can also donate to the Flathead River Conservation Project directly at [www.flatheadlandtrust.org](http://www.flatheadlandtrust.org).**

# Thank You TO OUR 2018 DONORS & SUPPORTERS

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### \$20,000 PLUS

USDA NRCS Agricultural Land Easement Program  
North American Wetland Conservation Act Program  
Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust  
Great Fish Community Challenge  
– Whitefish Community Foundation

### \$5,000 - \$20,000

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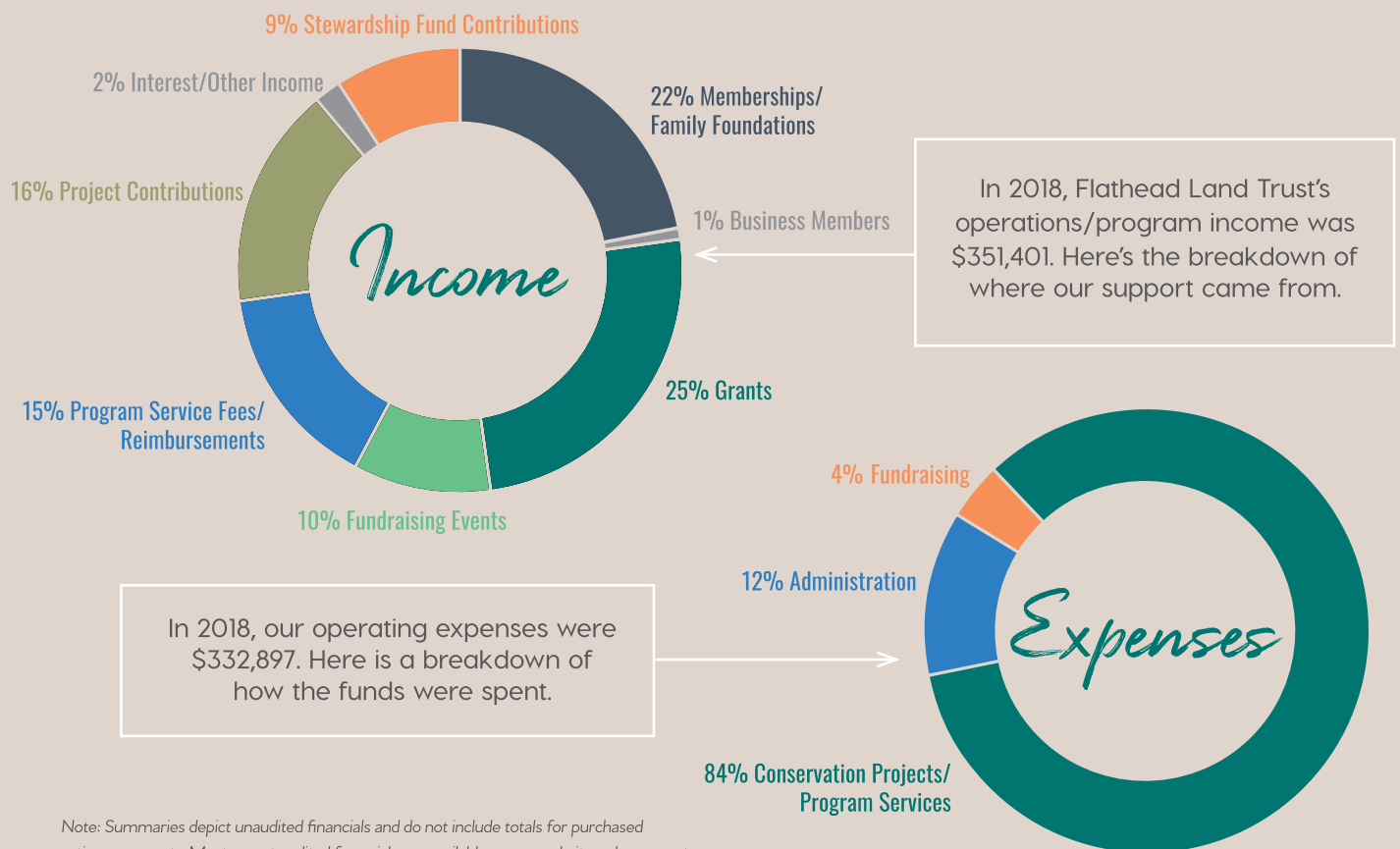
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# 2018 Annual Report AND FINANCIAL SUMMARY

**THIS PAST YEAR, YOUR SUPPORT MADE IT POSSIBLE TO COMPLETE THREE CONSERVATION EASEMENTS TOTALING 451 ACRES, OPEN A NEW BIRD VIEWING AREA, AND COMPLETE A COMMUNITY FISHING POND.**

- In May, we completed the **328-ACRE GROSSWILER DAIRY PURCHASED CONSERVATION EASEMENT** in the West Valley with funding from the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service Agricultural Land Easement Program. Thanks to many of you, we were able to raise the required match in order to receive the funding. In partnership with MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the landowners, we also helped finalize the public bird viewing area and opened it to the public in October.
- Also in May, we completed a **45-ACRE PURCHASED CONSERVATION EASEMENT** with David and Linda Kelly Kurfess along the north shore of Flathead Lake with funding through the North American Wetland Conservation Act.
- In December, we partnered with Molly Shepherd to permanently **CONSERVE** her **78-ACRE PROPERTY** which protects key wildlife habitat near Trail Creek in the North Fork of the Flathead River Valley.
- By the end of the year, we completed the **COLUMBIA FALLS COMMUNITY FISHING POND** with our partners, and moved several conservation projects forward which will protect land along the Flathead River, the North Fork, and Smith Lake Waterfowl Production Area. We also were granted renewal of our accreditation by the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission.

**FLATHEAD LAND TRUST NOW HOLDS 60 CONSERVATION EASEMENTS AND HAS PARTNERED ON 17 COOPERATIVE PROJECTS TO CONSERVE 14,474 TOTAL ACRES.** This was all made possible by the support of our incredible members and supporters. Thank you!





**FLATHEAD  
LAND TRUST**  
Conserving Our Legacy of Land and Water

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## Upcoming Events



### Summer Solstice Party – June 21

Join Flathead Land Trust and the Flathead Lakers to celebrate the longest day of the year at a historic barn along the north shore of Flathead Lake, and support new conservation along the Flathead River. Enjoy live music by Mike Murray and food and beverages provided by Somers Bay Café, Mission Mountain Winery, and Flathead Lake Brewing Co. Tickets are available for \$35 at [www.flatheadlandtrust.org](http://www.flatheadlandtrust.org).



### Flathead River Conservation Project Kayak Tour – July 20

Join us to kayak or canoe on the Flathead River to view the Flathead River Conservation Project area as well as existing conservation, watch wildlife and birds, and enjoy this placid and beautiful section of the river. The tour is 4 miles long with an option to increase to 6 miles. To sign up please call 752-8293 or email [lkatzman@flatheadlandtrust.org](mailto:lkatzman@flatheadlandtrust.org).



### Great Fish Community Challenge – July 25-September 13

We're so excited to be part of the Whitefish Community Foundation Great Fish Community Challenge again this year! The Great Fish Challenge, in just 4 years running has raised over \$7 Million for local charities as well as considerable awareness for causes in our community. Watch for events and ways you can give back to Flathead Land Trust and benefit conservation during this fun campaign starting on July 25th. More info at [whitefishcommunityfoundation.org/great-fish/](http://whitefishcommunityfoundation.org/great-fish/)



### The Land Affair – August 15

Don't miss Flathead Land Trust's annual summer fundraising event benefiting northwest Montana's open spaces and wild places. We'll be hosting The Land Affair again this year at Cypress Yard in Whitefish on Thursday, August 15 starting at 5:30 PM. Live music will be provided by The Bad Larry's, a talented acoustical duo, and locally-sourced Montana food and beverages will be served. The event directly benefits our conservation efforts throughout the Flathead and northwest Montana. Tickets are on sale for \$35 each at [www.flatheadlandtrust.org](http://www.flatheadlandtrust.org).