

SPRING/SUMMER 2018

# VIEW *Points*



Photo by Steve Müller



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

*"My favorite weather is bird chirping weather"*  
-Terri Guillemets



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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.



# THE CHANGING FACE OF THE FLATHEAD

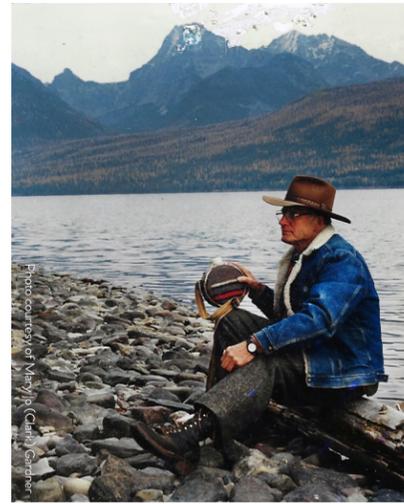
The most common comment I hear when talking to Flathead Valley residents is concern over how fast we are growing and what that might mean for the future of our open spaces, wildlife habitat and water resources. The Flathead has been experiencing growth and development for at least four decades now, but we're experiencing it at a much faster pace today. A recent study by Headwaters Economics shows that between 1990 and 2016, the Flathead lost 71,200 acres of open space to housing development. I think the more telling statistic also shows that most of that development (63%) has occurred on land outside of incorporated city boundaries, and 45% of that development has been on lots larger than 10 acres.

The study goes on to conclude that development on larger lots is quickly changing our culture, economy, and natural resources not just in the Flathead, but throughout Montana. It certainly poses challenges for wildlife, water quality, and the state's heritage of wide open lands. But, growth is good for the Flathead as well. The question is – how can we grow but also retain the essential natural qualities that we are lucky to enjoy in this special corner of Montana?

Fortunately, vast areas of undeveloped land remain and we, as your local land trust, are working hard every day to conserve the special places that deserve to be protected. The fact is, we are different here in the Flathead and the growth and change we're experiencing doesn't need to define who we are or what we'll be in the future. Our beautiful tapestry of lakes, rivers, farms and forests are what defines us. We know we're going to grow and change, we just need to continue to be intentional in conserving the best of what makes living here such a privilege.

The solution is simple and you are at the heart of it. As a community-based conservation organization, we fully rely on your support to sustain our work and conserve this incredible heritage. You make all the difference in keeping the Flathead the kind of place we know and love no matter how fast we are growing and changing.

Paul Travis  
Executive Director



## REMEMBERING FOUNDING BOARD MEMBER, ALLAN R. CLARK

A little over a year ago, we lost a quiet champion for conservation. Allan R. Clark was a multifaceted man. He went for excellence in everything he did. It was not what you said, or what you professed. It was what you did that mattered. Allan quietly helped and directed many local organizations and causes. As a founding director of The Flathead Land Trust, he did what he could to conserve our relationship to open land. That seed was planted by his father, a farmer in the Lake Blaine area, who became concerned as other farmers began selling off parts of their land for development. He was an early advocate of cluster development to preserve remaining farmland and scenic views and this certainly inspired his son Allan to do something about it. In 1985, Flathead Land Trust was founded by Allan and nine other visionary board members to do just that.

Bill Dakin, longtime FLT supporter and past board member, offers his remembrance of Allan:

*"My long association with the Flathead Land Trust in the mid-90's started after most of the founders had stepped back. Only a few years in did I learn that Allan Clark, whom I had long-enjoyed as a fellow Rotarian, was one of them. Allan was a native son, of a long-time Flathead farm family, and had the love of the land that comes from wise stewardship; nurturing its bounty, and seeing it as a forever asset. He had seen so much change and knew that only by enabling and facilitating voluntary conservation could the Flathead he loved endure. That my soft-speaking modest Rotarian friend was one of the founders was profoundly validating to me. It firmed my confidence and resolve that the Land Trust's purpose was vital across many generations and grounded in the love of the land. Thank you, Allan..."*

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

There's a new trail in Columbia Falls thanks to our partnership with the community. This April, Flathead Land Trust worked with partners at the City of Columbia Falls, the LOR Foundation, and Montana Conservation Corps to build a new connector trail that allows pedestrian and hiker access to Rivers Edge Park along the Flathead River. The new trail makes it possible to walk from Columbus Park near downtown Columbia Falls directly to Rivers Edge Park without having to follow a circuitous route along city streets.

Crew leaders from Montana Conservation Corps, Northern Rockies spent a wet and cold April week working with city councilman Darin Fisher to complete the majority of the trail and did an impressive job. A big thank you to everyone who helped make the new trail possible including our partnership grant with the City of Columbia Falls through the LOR Foundation.

The connector trail is part of our larger project to enhance Rivers Edge Park with a community fishing pond. The work on the fishing pond is expected to begin this fall with a possible opening date of next spring.



## CRITICAL SANDHILL CRANE HABITAT IN WEST VALLEY IS FINALLY PROTECTED

On May 10th, in partnership with the Grosswiler and Marvin families, we completed the final conservation easement which will protect a total of almost 400 acres of wetlands and surrounding farmland of the West Valley Wetlands. The conservation easement protects habitat that is vital to over 150 species of birds and especially to sandhill cranes, as well as scenic open space and productive farmland in perpetuity.



Under the conservation easement, the land will remain in private ownership managed by the landowner. However, as part of the project, the Grosswiler and Marvin families have generously allowed for a bird viewing area to be created for the public overlooking the unique pothole wetland and roosting area for sandhill cranes. The bird viewing area will be constructed this summer in cooperation with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and open to the public next fall in time to view the sandhill cranes. It will serve as an educational site for local schools and other educational programs. This incredible project wouldn't have been possible if we hadn't received such a huge outpouring of support from this community. We are beyond grateful and it's so exciting to know that this ecological and community treasure will continue to be here for so many generations of people and birds to come.

# ANOTHER BIRD OASIS ON THE NORTH SHORE OF FLATHEAD LAKE SAFEGUARDED



Photo by Harley Murma

On wintry days in March, flocks of beautiful tundra swans and elegant northern pintail descend out of gray skies in the Flathead. Seeing these striking birds grace our valley is an annual spectacle, and a sure sign that spring has arrived. This spring, with snow and ice covering ponds, lakes and river sloughs well into March, these birds relied on some of the only open water in the valley along the north shore of Flathead Lake and Flathead River to rest and feed during their migration. One of these refuges on the north shore of Flathead Lake is a seasonally wet area on property owned by David and Linda Kurfess adjacent to the Flathead Lake Waterfowl Production Area. This sanctuary of open water on the Kurfess property garnered flocks of hundreds of northern pintail, mallards, and Canada geese as well as dozens of tundra swans in mid to late March this wintry spring. Other waterfowl used the haven as well including the unique American widgeon and northern shoveler.

This 45-acre bird oasis on the Kurfess property was protected forever with a conservation easement in May.

**The Kurfess conservation easement helps secure habitat and open land on the north shore which is critical to tens of thousands of waterfowl and shorebirds on their migration each year and 229 species of birds throughout the year.**

In fact, it helps protect a rare gem unmatched anywhere else in the western United States. The north shore includes seven miles of largely undeveloped shoreline on the largest freshwater lake west of the Mississippi River which is fed by the Flathead River, the life blood of the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem with headwaters in Glacier National Park and the Bob Marshall Wilderness complex.

The Kurfess conservation easement continues the imple-

mentation of a shared conservation vision by Flathead Land Trust and its partners to protect the important landscape on the north shore of Flathead Lake as well as critical lands along the Flathead River. Many thanks to the landowners such as David and Linda Kurfess, because realizing the shared conservation vision depends on the interest of the landowners.

**With the completion of the Kurfess project, this effective partnership has protected 542 acres on the north shore adding to the existing land conserved by the 1,887-acre Flathead Lake Waterfowl Production Area administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and 186 acres of land conserved by private landowners with conservation easements.**

The River to Lake Initiative has also helped conserve over 5,000 acres along the Flathead River adding to an existing network of over 8,000 acres of protected public and private lands along the river. Many thanks to the landowners such as David and Linda Kurfess as realizing the shared conservation vision depends on the interest of the landowners.

On June 28, Flathead Land Trust and the Flathead Lakers are hosting a celebration of the completion of the Kurfess conservation project with a charter tour aboard the Far West Boat along the north shore of Flathead Lake. The boat tour will begin at Lakeside and travel along the lake shore to the mouth of the Flathead River and then back across the lake. This boat tour will also involve a fundraiser for the Flathead River to Lake Initiative's conservation effort to protect critical land along the Flathead River. Join us for food, music, and celebration on Thursday, June 28, from 6-9 pm; for more information and to buy tickets on-line go to [www.flatheadlandtrust.org](http://www.flatheadlandtrust.org).



Photo by Christ Peterson



Photo by Gary Bendig

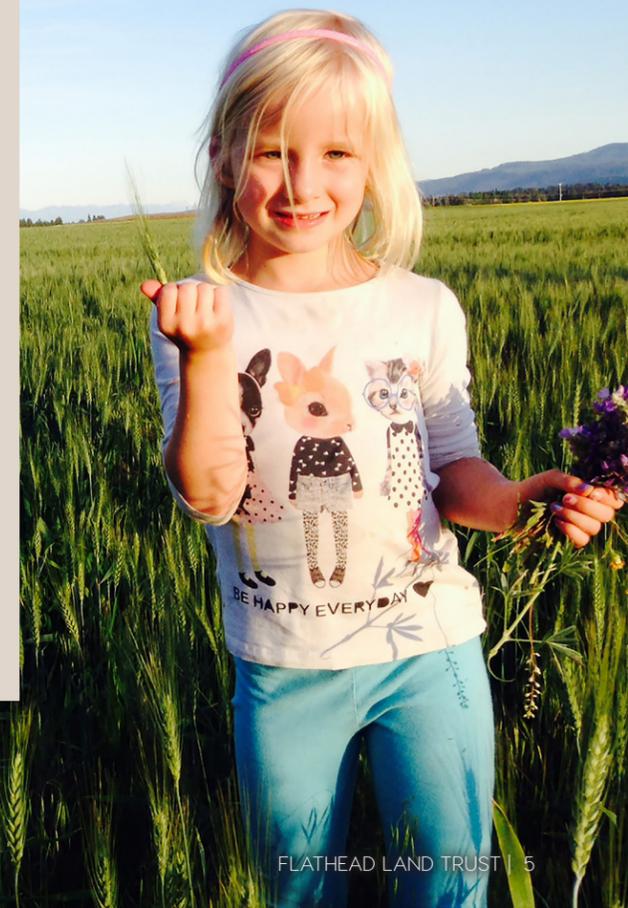
## GIFTS THAT CREATE A LASTING LEGACY



We are launching our new legacy giving program with a new brochure and webpage so you can better understand how you can honor your lifelong values and aspirations while planning for your own future as well as your loved ones. A planned gift to Flathead Land Trust can be transformational in strengthening our ability to accomplish beneficial conservation for many years to come. Here's one of the many ways you can make such an impact...

**Naming FLT in your Will or Living Trust** – A bequest is one of the most common types of planned gifts. You can specify your bequest to FLT as a particular dollar amount, a percentage of your estate, the residue of your estate or a specific asset such as real estate or securities. Bequests offer you great flexibility; your assets remain in your control during your lifetime and you can modify your bequest at any time.

Contact Paul at [ptravis@flatheadlandtrust.org](mailto:ptravis@flatheadlandtrust.org) or 406-752-8293 to receive the new brochure and information of how you can make a planned gift to FLT.



# THANK YOU TO OUR 2017 DONORS & SUPPORTERS

## GRANTORS AND FOUNDATIONS

### \$20,000 +

LOR Foundation  
Great Fish Community Challenge –  
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### \$5,000 - \$20,000

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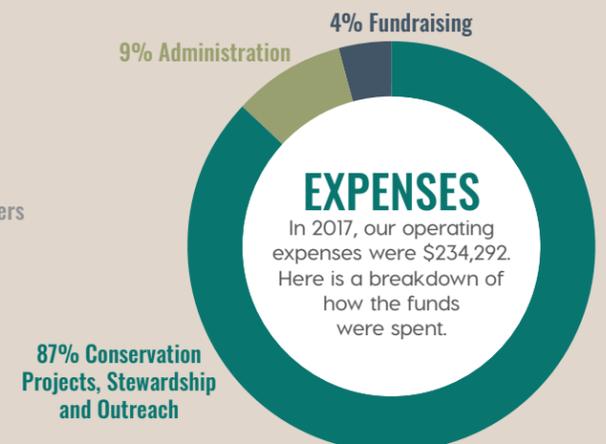
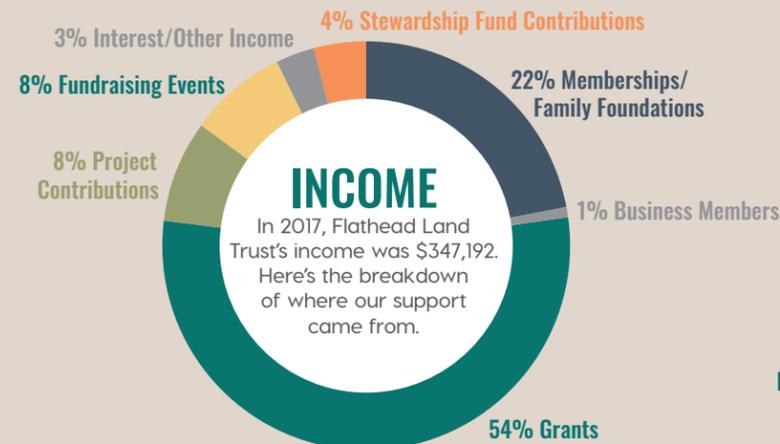
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Grosswiler Dairy, Inc.  
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# 2017 ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL SUMMARY

This past year, your support helped to conserve the West Valley Wetlands. This big and far reaching project encompasses three conservation easements as well as a new public bird viewing area. We completed the fundraising of the non-federal match in September and closed on the first two conservation easements in October. That allowed us to progress towards closing the final 328 acre conservation easement this spring as well as the public access easement for the bird viewing area, which is expected to be open by this fall. Your support also allowed us to make significant progress towards building a new trail and family fishing pond in Columbia Falls; permanent protection of some of the best wildlife, bear and elk habitat in northwest Montana; and permanent protection of more important bird habitat and open space along the North Shore of Flathead Lake. We couldn't have done any of this without our generous members and supporters! Thank you.





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

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**June 28**

### North Shore Boat Tour and Conservation Celebration



Don't miss our Far West Boat Tour along with co-hosts the Flathead Lakers on Thursday, June 28th from 6:00 – 9:00 PM. Celebrate conservation of the N. Shore and the recent Kurfess project with a summer evening boat tour. The tour will offer complimentary appetizers and a no host bar as well as live entertainment by David

Walburn. Tickets are \$50 and can be purchased by calling 752-8293 or online at [flatheadlandtrust.org](http://flatheadlandtrust.org).

**Jul 26-Sept 14**



### Great Fish Community Challenge

We are excited to be participating in the Whitefish Community Foundation Great Fish Community Challenge again! The Great Fish Challenge is a charitable giving campaign that begins July 26 and runs through September 14. Contributions can be made online at [www.greatfishchallenge.org](http://www.greatfishchallenge.org) or with

an official donation form and will be partially matched by Whitefish Community Foundation. Last year, we raised over \$28,000 which really boosted our ability to do more conservation. Let's see what we can do this year!

**August 16**

### The Land Affair – Annual Benefit



Join us on August 16th at Cypress Yard in Whitefish for our annual fundraising event to celebrate and protect open spaces and wild places throughout northwest Montana. This colorful evening event will include live music by singer/songwriter Mike Murray, local farm sourced hors d'oeuvres, beer, wine and champagne, and an exciting silent auction and live drive. Tickets are \$35/single and \$70/couple. Purchase your tickets at [flatheadlandtrust.org](http://flatheadlandtrust.org) or call 406-752-8293.

**September**

### West Valley Wetlands Bird Viewing Area Opening Celebration



Join us in celebrating the newly conserved West Valley Wetlands and the opening of the bird viewing area for the public. The celebration will include a ribbon cutting ceremony, presentations, and what will likely be some great viewing of sandhill cranes and other birds during their fall migration. This event will

be scheduled later this summer so stay tuned. Contact us for more details at 406-752-8293.