



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

**2025**

# ANNUAL REPORT

Protecting Northwest Montana's Spectacular Land  
and Water Legacy through Community-Based Conservation



**YEARS**

# Letters from Our Leadership

By happy circumstance, my tenure as Board President began with our 40th Anniversary year. We truly marked the occasion well, with securing multiple easements over the course of the year, enjoying absolutely solid support from our donors and partners, having the benefit of our tremendously talented and engaged staff and board of directors, seeing great community engagement at our Harrell Forest property, garnering wonderful press coverage, and celebrating with a beautiful gathering at the Kohrs' enchanting and easement-protected riverside property.

As I write these words, thinking back to that summer's day of our 40th party, I'm remembering the good cheer, the thoughtfully prepared remarks, the memories and the absolute enthusiasm shared by those gathered. Some I knew, some I didn't, and many who have passed on or couldn't attend were there in our thoughts - and, tangibly, in the easements they helped secure and the organization they founded and nurtured in its youth. They, and all those who have devoted time and treasure to the organization over the years, have seen the Flathead Land Trust through from the early days of its founding in the 1980s to the robust and growing organization we are today. I remember thinking: "This is what it means to be on the shoulders of giants," both broadly and specifically, as I reflected this summer on the history of land trusts in general, ours in particular, and on the ethos of being good stewards to this land that we cherish.

There is much to continue celebrating, going forward in 2026, as you'll see reflected in this report.

Onwards, and in so doing, may we all be the cherished "giants" that future generations, and the land itself, thank for our contributions!



Margaret Notley, Board President

In 2025, Flathead Land Trust marked a major milestone - 40 years of community-based conservation. Since 1985, with your support, we've helped conserve more than 20,000 acres across Northwest Montana. That achievement belongs to this community. You are the driving force behind everything we do.



Flathead Land Trust was built on a shared love of place and a commitment to protecting the landscapes that define our region. Community-based conservation works because of people like you - visionary landowners, dedicated partners, and generous supporters - who believe these lands are worth protecting for generations to come.

This annual report highlights just one year in that journey, but it reflects something bigger. In 2025, we completed a record number of conservation easements, expanded stewardship efforts, and created more opportunities for people to connect with protected lands. At the same time, we've strengthened our organization and continue to grow staff capacity and organizational resources. In the past ten years, Flathead Land Trust's organizational assets have grown by over six times and our ability to do more impactful conservation and recreation projects is at an all-time high.

But conservation isn't just about acres or milestones. It's about people - families who choose to care for their land and ensure it endures for future generations. Their stories remind us why this work matters. And it's the power of their stories which is at the root of all the conservation we do.

As you read this annual report, I hope you're inspired not only by what we've accomplished, but by the shared commitment that makes it all possible. Together, we are protecting the places we love - now and for the future.

Paul Travis, Executive Director

## FLATHEAD LAND TRUST'S Land Protection Snapshot: 1985 - 2025



86  
Conservation  
Easements



16,132  
Easement  
acres  
protected

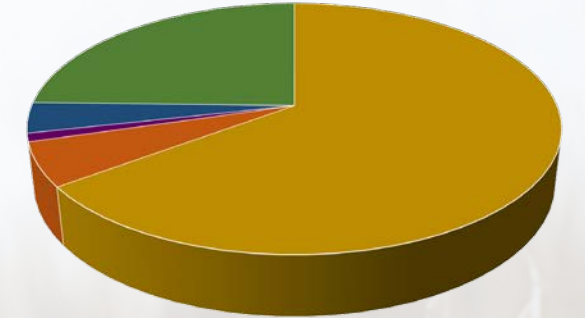


21  
Partner  
Projects




20,572  
Total  
Acres  
Protected

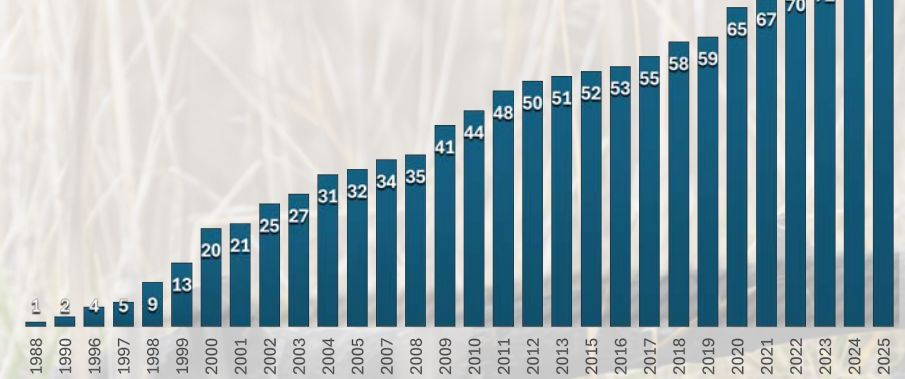
## Habitats Protected - 2025



■ Cropland    ■ Wetlands    ■ Riparian Forest  
■ Hay/Pasture    ■ Upland Forest

IN 2025:  **7 Conservation Easements**  
**970.8 Acres Conserved**

## Number of Conservation Easements (cumulative)



# The Forever Factor: Conservation in Perpetuity

In a rapidly changing Montana, some things are too precious to be temporary. The open spaces, clean water, abundant wildlife, and agricultural traditions we cherish define our lives here and inspire our collective commitment to their protection. While shorter-term conservation leases of 30 - 40 years have gained recent traction, Flathead Land Trust remains dedicated to, and exclusively executes, permanent conservation easements.

## The Perpetuity Principle

Development pressure in Northwest Montana is constant. While development is a natural part of a growing community, some places are too vital to lose. From critical wildlife corridors to historic family ranches, iconic lands that define our region's character deserve protection, so they remain intact forever.

Once a family farm is subdivided or a wildlife corridor is paved, it is nearly impossible to undo that change. Permanent protection removes the unpredictability of the future, ensuring that a landscape remains intact and insulated from economic fluctuations or shifts in local zoning.

## Planning for Generations, Not Decades

Montana family businesses such as agriculture and forestry aren't 30-year industries; they are multi-generational legacies. A permanent conservation easement provides the stability needed for many families to invest in long-term soil health, irrigation infrastructure, and sustainable timber stands. They also allow for more certainty for heirs. Conservation easements provide heirs with a clear roadmap, removing the burden of difficult decisions under pressure, while offering potential estate tax benefits that help keep land in families.

The next generation of farmers and ranchers may not be able to afford agricultural properties at market value. By permanently

extinguishing development rights, a conservation easement ensures that agricultural land remains priced according to its productive capacity rather than its subdivision potential, keeping it affordable for future producers.

## Biological Integrity and Wildlife Corridors

Nature doesn't recognize terms. Safeguarding critical conservation values such as water quality requires the permanent protection of a network of intact lands for long-term ecosystem health. Grizzly bears, elk, and migratory birds rely on consistent, connected habitats. A term easement can create a temporary bridge, but if that bridge disappears in 30 years, the entire regional conservation network can fail.

## Economic Incentives

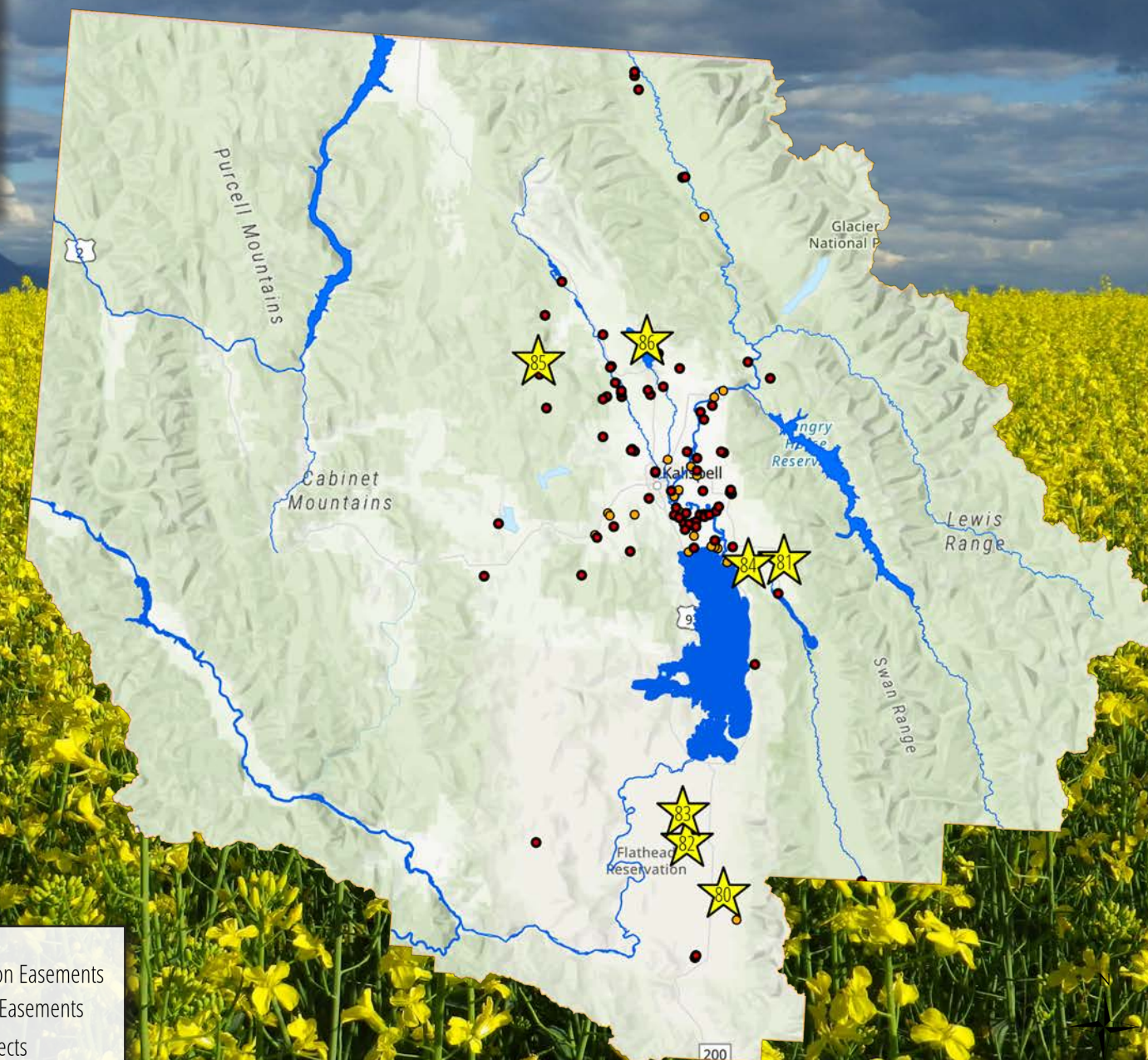
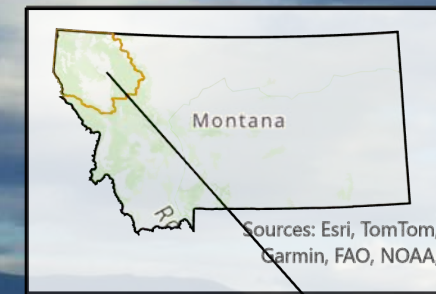
Federal tax benefits and often grant funding are specifically tied to perpetuity. Because the landowner is making a permanent commitment, the IRS and conservation funders offer incentives they would not offer for a temporary agreement. Much of our work is only possible through these financial benefits.

## A Contract with the Community

When a Land Trust holds a permanent easement, it is a promise to the community that the scenic views, clean water, and local food security they enjoy today will be there for their great-grandchildren. A permanent conservation easement also includes a commitment from the Land Trust to monitor and defend that land forever. This is a partnership that outlives any single individual.

Together, we seek the peace of mind that comes from knowing that our cherished places will remain a permanent part of our landscape. Permanent conservation isn't just about what we are protecting today, it is about what we are refusing to lose tomorrow.

# Flathead Land Trust's Conservation Portfolio:



- ★ 2025 Flathead Land Trust Conservation Easements
- All Flathead Land Trust Conservation Easements
- Flathead Land Trust Cooperative Projects
- ▭ Flathead Land Trust Service Area

Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

*"Permanent conservation isn't just about what we are protecting today; it is about what we are refusing to lose tomorrow."*

# Flathead Land Trust's 2025 Conservation Easements:

## Conservation Easement #80: Davis



Jim and Roxie Davis secured a 40-acre conservation easement near Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge in the Mission Valley, protecting a portion of a vital wildlife corridor that connects the Mission Mountain Wilderness to thousands of acres of protected habitat. The property supports diverse species, including grizzly bears and over 100 bird species, by safeguarding wetlands along Mollman Creek and essential stopover grounds within the Pacific Flyway. Additionally, the easement preserves fertile soils for future agricultural use, ensuring that the land's ecological and heritage value remains intact.



## Conservation Easement #81: Gray



Artists Darrell and Lael Gray partnered with Flathead Land Trust to place a conservation easement on their 20-acre forested property near Bigfork, securing critical wildlife habitat between the Swan Range and Swan River. This diverse landscape of upland and riparian forests, wetlands, and springs provides a permanent refuge for species like grizzly bears, wolves, and moose, while protecting the water quality of the Swan River watershed. By limiting development, the Grays have ensured that their land remains an undisturbed sanctuary for both wildlife and the creative inspiration that fuels their art.



## Conservation Easement #82: Guenzler



Paul and Sharon Guenzler permanently protected 290 acres of their historic Mission Valley ranch, adjacent to an existing 160-acre conservation easement. By continuing to ranch on horseback, the family utilizes this easement to safeguard their century-long legacy and self-sustained cattle and horse operation. The agreement preserves rich soils, vital wetlands, and a unique native bunchgrass community along West Miller Coulee from future development. It protects critical winter range for one of the nation's densest populations of rough-legged hawks and other birds of prey, while ensuring that Montana's agricultural heritage endures.



## Conservation Easement #83: Sherman



Cody and Elizabeth Sherman have conserved 387 acres of their Mission Valley farm from future development, permanently protecting a century-long legacy and rich agricultural soils. By reinvesting easement proceeds into additional local acreage, the Shermans are ensuring that their self-sufficient cattle operation thrives for their children's future. The property supports diverse birds including short-eared owls and sandhill cranes, and provides critical winter range for birds of prey. This project further strengthens the region's heritage by adding to a contiguous network of nearly 2,200 acres of protected farmland.



## Conservation Easement #84: Bradshaw



Just northeast of Bigfork, Sally and Paul Bradshaw conserved their 40-acre property, helping to preserve a contiguous, minimally impacted, forest corridor extending from Swan Hill to the Swan River. Bordering Harrell Forest and PacifiCorp lands and augmenting a larger network of protected territory, including the Whitney conservation easement, the Bradshaw parcel safeguards critical habitat and a movement passageway for local wildlife. Protection of the property's healthy coniferous forests and meadows ensures that the rural character and ecological integrity of the surrounding Bigfork area endure for future generations.

## Conservation Easement #85: Star Meadows Area



A multi-generational effort spanning fifty years has culminated in the permanent conservation of 52 forested acres near Star Meadows. Originally part of a historic homestead, this easement protects the ecological integrity and water quality of a vital Logan Creek tributary, which meanders through the land for a third of a mile. Bordered on three sides by Flathead National Forest and nestled deep within this vast swath of public land, the property's mix of upland and riparian forests provides diverse habitats and adds to landscape-scale connectivity. This family legacy project ensures that a vital portion of the Tally Lake watershed is safeguarded in perpetuity.

## Conservation Easement #86: Big Mountain Area



Flathead Land Trust and the Heart of the Rockies Initiative partnered with local landowners to permanently protect 140 acres on the flank of Big Mountain. Bordered on two sides by Flathead National Forest and a conservation easement on a third, this project supplements a belt of open space including two extensive easements in the Whitefish area. This secures a vital corridor for grizzly bears and other wildlife moving between Glacier National Park and the Salish Mountains. By preserving mature forests and numerous springs, the easement safeguards Whitefish Lake's water quality and iconic scenic views along Big Mountain Road.

“Strategically located between conserved areas, this project protects one of the last undeveloped wildlife habitats on Big Mountain – a seasonal and year-round home to everything from mule deer to grizzly bears.”

– Jim Williams, Heart of the Rockies Initiative Partnership Manager



“Supporting the Land Trust is our way of giving back – of ensuring its rivers, forest and wildlife endure for those who will walk these trails long after we're gone.” – Sally & Paul Bradshaw

“Conservation easements allow the opportunity for agriculture to persist for future generations while retaining our open space in western Montana.” – Paul Guenzler

# Four Decades of Conservation: A Year of Celebration



**CELEBRATING 40 YEARS:** Our 2025 anniversary honored the community and landscapes defining northwest Montana. These milestone events fueled the shared passion carrying us forward:



**Conservation Easement Tours:** Property tours highlighted the Johnston and Nelson easements, celebrating families and landscapes that define our conservation mission.

**Kayak Tours:** Two Stillwater River kayak tours hosted 21 paddlers for wildlife-packed excursions viewing conserved lands along the Stillwater River.



**Harrell Forest Events:** "Community Day and "Tails on the Trails" celebrated hikers and hounds with" nature games, guided hikes, and professional dog leash training.

**Grand Opening of the Reed's Slough Bird Viewing Area:** Protected by a Flathead Land Trust easement on Danford family land, state leadership from Fish, Wildlife & Parks and project partners gathered to celebrate this viewing area created and managed by FWP.



**Brewery Events:** Local breweries Tamarack, Backslope, Bias, and Sacred Waters hosted Pint and Bingo Nights, turning happy hours into community-driven support for our 40-year-and-counting conservation mission.

**Connect and Protect!** Our 40th Anniversary celebration on the stunning conserved Kohrs property honored Flathead Land Trust's supporters, landowners, founders and past leaders whose enduring legacy guides our mission into the next forty years.



**2025 Conservation Leadership Award:** At our year-end celebration, we honored Sallie Gratch and her late husband, Alan, for their exceptional stewardship. With Sallie on Zoom, her grandsons and great-grandson accepted the award, honoring Alan and Sallie's decades of conservation by committing to carry on their vital legacy.



## 2025 PROGRAMS UPDATE:



**Stewardship:** In 2025, Flathead Land Trust successfully monitored all 79 preexisting conservation easements onsite, ensuring the continued protection of 15,161 acres of vital landscapes. This diligent oversight reflects our commitment to stewardship as the cornerstone of meaningful, perpetual conservation.

**Bird Education Program:** Our expanded program added Bigfork and Two Eagle River schools, engaging students through classroom activities, field trips, and live raptors from Montana Wildwings Recovery Center.



**Harrell Forest Trail Ambassador Program:** Heartfelt thanks to our Trail Ambassadors; as the "eyes and ears" on-site, their dedicated stewardship ensures high-quality trail management and property oversight.

## DEFINING MOMENTS OF 2025:

**Excellence in Leadership:** Executive Director Paul Travis received Whitefish Community Foundation's Linda Engh-Grady Award for Nonprofit Excellence, including a \$10,000 grant. This honor celebrates Paul's transformative leadership and impact.



**Record-Breaking Success:** Our most successful Great Fish Community Challenge ever raised \$108,741 from 225 donors, directly supporting local conservation. A record \$8,098,663 was raised for 85 nonprofits during Whitefish Community Foundation's annual campaign. Thank you for your support!

**Harrell Forest Interpretive Sign:** Our first interpretive sign, installed in June, explores local human history, from Native American origins to the Gates family and the Harrell/Horns, who generously donated the land.

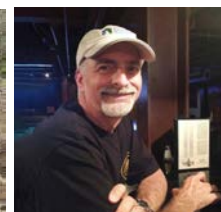


**Capitol Engagement:** At Land Trust Day in Helena, staff joined other Montana land trusts, landowners and board members to talk with legislators and Governor Gianforte, emphasizing continued land protection support.

**Expanding Our Team:** Liam Diekmann joined our team this fall, bringing youth and energy. Following in the footsteps of his father, the late conservationist Alex Diekmann, he has dedicated his career to conserving the lands and waters that make Montana so special.



## HONORING DEDICATED SERVICE:



**Outgoing Leadership:** Rick Mace concluded a nine-year Board tenure, contributing decades of grizzly bear expertise and ecological insight. Dave McNutt, a finance committee pillar, retired after providing many years of vital stability and commercial banking guidance.

**Extraordinary Legacy:** Mary and Gary Sloan's "quiet, steady, and innovative" leadership spanned decades. We are profoundly grateful for their estate gift, ensuring that their lifelong commitment to conservation continues.



# HELPING CONSERVATION SOAR: THANK YOU TO OUR 2025 SUPPORTERS

## GRANTORS AND FOUNDATIONS:

### \$100,000 PLUS

NRCS Agricultural Land Easement Program  
Whitefish Community Foundation - Great Fish Community Challenge

### \$25,000 - \$99,999

Heart of the Rockies Initiative - Keep It Connected Program

### \$1,000 - \$24,999

AGL Foundation  
The Bible Foundation  
California Nativty Foundation  
The Cinnabar Foundation  
Ila B. Dousman Fund  
Land Trust Alliance  
Markovich Family Foundation  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
SahanDaywi Foundation

### INDIVIDUALS:

#### \$100,000 PLUS

Estate of Mary and Gary Sloan

#### \$25,000 - \$99,999

Anonymous  
David and Chet Barclay  
Ben and Anne Binger  
Sallie and Alan Gratch

#### \$5,000 - \$24,999

Anonymous  
Page Anderson and Julie Burke  
Bloom Family Fund  
Paul and Sally Bradshaw  
Kimberly Corette  
Roberta Hintz  
Jeanne Olson  
Leif and Amy Peterson  
Lauren Pipkorn  
Teresa Quinn  
Estate of Franklin Schroeter  
James and Janna Shennan  
Preston and Marjorie Spencer  
Kay Stone

#### \$1,000 - \$4,999

William and Elizabeth Bayne  
Stuart and Patricia Breslin  
Bryan Caforio  
Jerry and Suzi Candy  
Tom and Kris Carlson  
Brian and Marie Clark  
Lawrence Cohen and Sue Eberle  
Bill and Tina Corwin  
DAFgiving360  
Bill and Sarah Dakin  
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Mary Ann and Don Garner  
Jennifer A. Graham

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Dennis Heinzig and Iona McMillan  
Cheryl and Thomas Hoban  
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Walter and Nancy Kuhn  
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Nedom Family Giving Fund  
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George Scherman and Kate Kendall  
Kevin and Elizabeth Scholten  
Dan and Kim Short  
Bruce Tannehill and Gail Cleveland

### \$500-\$999

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John and Amy Waller  
Becky and Larry Williams\*  
Heggie and Julie Wilson  
Alison Young

### \$500-\$999

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Julie and Sam Baldrige  
Kirk Ball  
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Rick and Trish Bartoskewitz  
Gael Bissell and Rick Mace  
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James Corwin  
Kerry and Arla Culver  
Penelope Deleray  
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Lisa Flowers  
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Randy and Rayne Beach  
Valerie Beebe  
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Dane and Melanie Boat  
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Victoria Byrd-Rinck  
Barbara Calm  
BJ Carlson  
Dan and Susannah Casey  
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Sue Cummings  
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Kaitlyn Farrar  
Jan Finkle

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Daniel Zlogar and Kelly Redfield

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Francesca Droll and John Webster  
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Flathead Lakers  
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Lydia Garvey  
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Kristen Harrison  
Roy and Bernie Hassinger  
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Andy Hudak  
Leslie and Will Hunt  
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## UP TO \$100

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John Andersen  
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Jerry and Sharon Baracker  
Greg and Kathy Barkus  
Susan Barth  
Behron, LLC  
Benchmark Concrete  
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Gary and Shirley Carver  
Jess Cerra and Sam Boardman  
Jenny Cloutier  
Connie Cohen  
Karin Connelly  
Ed and Sue Corrigan  
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Denise Davies  
Moselle Depriest  
Angel Dominguez  
JoAnn Speelman Dramer  
Francesca Droll and John Webster  
Sally C. Ericsson and Tom Garwin  
Fall Line Consulting  
Hans and Leah Fischer  
Flathead Lakers  
Mayre Flowers  
Italo E. Franceschi and Gayl Tiechert  
Ryan Friel  
Susan Garside  
Lydia Garvey  
Bob and Joan Gates  
Andrea Goff  
Christina Granrud  
Jonathan Haber and Susan Barmeyer  
Kristen Harrison  
Roy and Bernie Hassinger  
Paul Holmgren  
Kendra Hope and Paul Sheehan  
Andy Hudak  
Leslie and Will Hunt  
Ryan and Eve Hunter  
Claudine Johnson  
Gordon Johnson  
Judith Johnson  
Jim Rogers and Sherry Jones  
Mike Jopek and Pam Gerwe  
Gil Jordan and Kim Pinter  
Clifford and Cassidy Kipp  
Leta Kopp  
Dennis LaBonty  
Jim Lackey  
Heather Landi  
Scott and Caroline Lawhead  
Leo Keane and Gail Leonard

## GIFTS IN MEMORY OF JUDITH PRESSMAR

Lisa Flowers  
John Howington

## GIFTS IN HONOR OF JULIE STETTER

Anonymous

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Glacier Bank  
Kehoe's Agate Shop  
Park Side Credit Union  
Sliters Lumber and Building Supply  
Trees for Life  
Whitefish Credit Union

### \$100-\$999

Backslope Brewing  
Bias Brewing  
Bish's RV Kalispell  
Bridge Street Cottages  
Center for Native Plants  
David Fetveit Real Estate Broker  
Flathead Lake Brewing Company  
Gandy Dancer Pepper  
Glacier Anglers and Outfitters  
First Montana Bank  
Freedom Bank  
Forestation  
Insty Prints  
Last Best K9  
McCabe Excavation  
Merrill Lynch, Dan Short Broker  
Mindful Designs  
Montana Raft Company  
Schellinger Construction  
Tim Rogge Construction  
The Simple Chef Catering/ Farm to Fork  
Snappy Sport Senter  
Susan D. Hulslander, CPA, P.C.  
Tamarack Brewing Company

## GIFTS IN MEMORY OF TOM LEE

Anonymous

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Roy and Bernie Hassinger  
Judith Johnson and family  
Jeanne Olson  
Patricia and Gregory Sanders

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Margene Berry  
Jim Watson and Carol Bibler  
Gael Bissell and Rick Mace  
Susan and Robert Brown  
Susie Burch  
Bill and Sarah Dakin  
Alan and Sally Gratch  
Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Johnston  
Paulette Lawrence  
Francis McAllister  
Cathryn McDewitt  
Susan Munsinger and Mark Pirrie  
Adele and James Murphy  
Randy and Gini Ogle  
Marylane Pannell  
Dan and Jean Paschke  
David and Linda Peterson  
Gordon and Carol Pirrie  
Judith Pressmar  
Paula Schustrom  
Gail Steele  
Diane Taylor-Mahnke  
Francis and Geneva VanRinsum  
Sara Walsh  
Jane Wheeler  
Diane Yarus

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Paula Schustrom  
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Francis and Geneva VanRinsum  
Sara Walsh  
Jane Wheeler  
Diane Yarus

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Becky Petracek  
John Andersen  
Susan Barth  
Barbara Boorman  
John and Kris Bruninga

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Lisa Flowers  
John Howington

## GIFTS IN HONOR OF JULIE STETTER

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Tamarack Brewing Company

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Anonymous

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## CONSERVATION EASEMENT STEWARDSHIP CONTRIBUTIONS

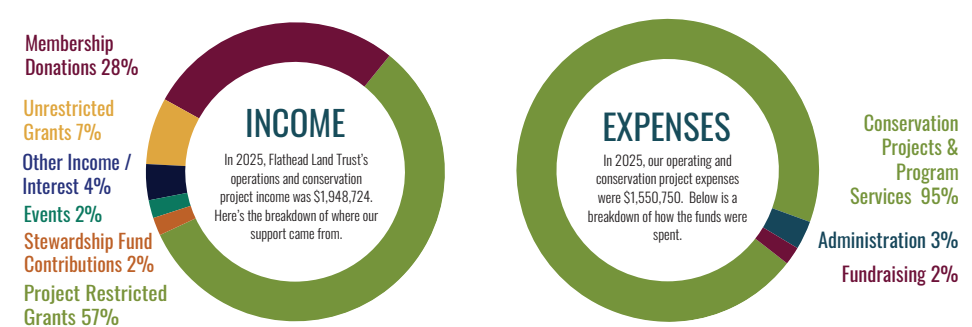
Anonymous (2)  
Chrysta Bourne  
Sally and Paul Bradshaw  
Jim and Roxie Davis  
Lael and Darrell Gray  
Paul and Sharon Guenzler  
Iron Horse  
Connie Nelson Lane  
Cody and Elizabeth Sherman

## GIFTS IN MEMORY OF LEX BLOOD

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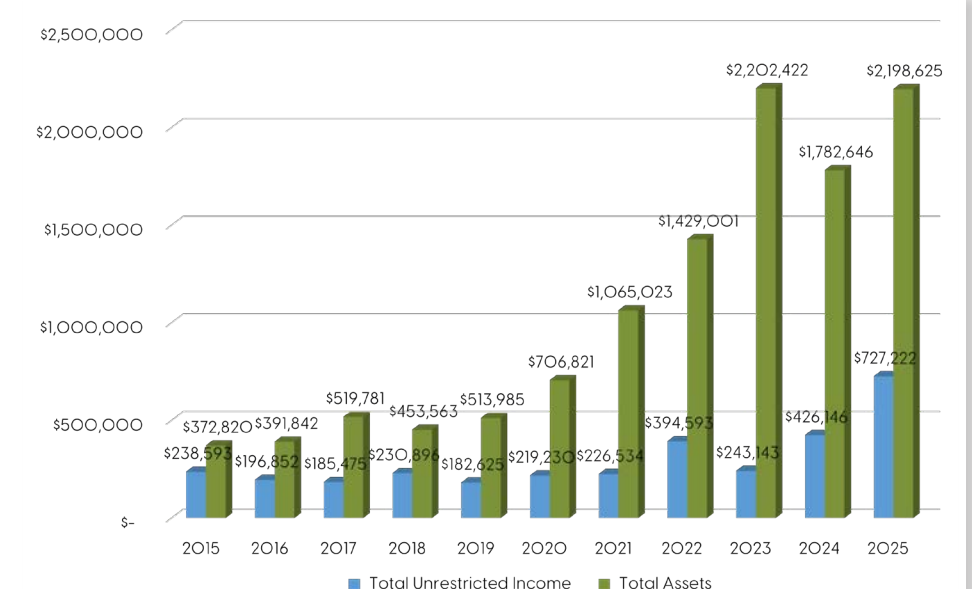
# FLATHEAD LAND TRUST'S FINANCIAL BREAKDOWN FOR 2025:



Note: Summaries depict unaudited financials. Most recent audited financials are available on our website or by request.

ASSETS (as of 12/31/25):	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$162,009
Investments and Money Market	\$1,560,958
Property and Fixed Assets	\$475,658
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$2,198,625</b>

# OPERATIONS INCOME AND ASSETS, 2015 - 2025:



\*Does not include donated conservation easement in-kind values

## 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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President

JAMES RAFFERTY  
Treasurer

CHRIS ALBERT  
Secretary

RICK MACE  
KARL RUDBACH  
JENNIFER ROGGE  
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Executive Director

RYAN HUNTER  
Land Protection Specialist

LAURA KATZMAN  
Land Protection Specialist

LIAM DIEKMANN  
Land Protection Specialist

JENNIFER GUSE  
Communications, Outreach and  
Special Projects Coordinator

[info@flatheadlandtrust.org](mailto:info@flatheadlandtrust.org)  
[www.flatheadlandtrust.org](http://www.flatheadlandtrust.org)

### OUR MISSION

Flathead Land Trust is dedicated to protecting Northwest Montana's Spectacular Land & Water Legacy Through Community-Based Conservation.



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

690 N. Meridian, Suite 207 · P.O. Box 1913  
Kalispell, MT 59903-1913

