

Aerial photo of the Tongue River in spring. The *Tongue River Water Trail Assessment* can be viewed at [www.sheridanclt.org](http://www.sheridanclt.org).

## Tongue River Water Trail Assessment Complete

SCLT is excited to unveil the Tongue River Water Trail (TRWT) Assessment! The assessment was completed at the direction of SCLT's Board of Directors and under the guidance of SCLT's Recreation Work Group. Technical assistance was provided through a grant from the National Park Service's Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance Program. The assessment investigates the suitability of local waterways for a potential water trail, examines existing community support for a water trail system, and ultimately identifies a strategic approach to focus future investments toward developing a formally recognized Tongue River Water Trail.

This project would not be possible without SCLT volunteers who spent many hours on the water completing inventories of existing conditions and guiding the direction of the assessment. Thank you!

### **What is a Water Trail?**

A water trail, or blueway, is a delineated water route that uses navigable lakes and streams to connect access sites, resting places, and attractions for users of non-motorized watercraft. While the water trail is primarily designed for use by paddle craft, it can also provide significant recreational value to those who enjoy swimming, fishing, hunting, history, and wildlife viewing.

(Continued on page 2)

# Our Mission:

To preserve our heritage of open spaces, healthy rivers and creeks, working ranches, wildlife habitat, and vibrant history, while expanding non-motorized recreation opportunities to connect people with the places they love.

## Staff

Colin Betzler  
*Executive Director*

Claire Hobbs  
*Communications & Development Associate*

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SCLT

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Sheridan, WY 82801  
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**sheridanclt.org**



Excerpt from Section 3 of the assessment detailing current water conditions and elevation.

## Why Designate a Water Trail?

As today's communities look to engage all ages with healthy outdoor activities and strengthen their local economies, safe navigable waterways are a key piece of the puzzle. The TRWT takes its direction from an overall vision outlined by

National, State, and local planning documents.

The assessment features an inventory of existing conditions and identifies an implementation schedule to establish the critical infrastructure needed to create a safe and engaging water trail. We hope that

this assessment will be used by many partners to guide future investments improving recreation for our local waterways.

We will host a community river clean-up event this summer to kick off this initiative.

## Funding Secured for Tongue River Initiative

Tongue River Initiative (TRI), a partnership between SCLT, The Nature Conservancy NE Wyoming Chapter, and Sheridan County Conservation District, received \$1.8 million through the new Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). This funding further bolsters TRI's capabilities to work with landowners within the Tongue River watershed to improve fish and wildlife habitat, agriculture efficiency and water quality and flow levels in the Tongue River watershed.



Carrie Rogaczewski, District Manager for the Sheridan County Conservation District (left) discusses a TRI fencing project with Rick Pallister of The Nature Conservancy (middle) and local landowner John Buyok.

The funding will be used on a variety of activities including: protecting the river and creeks from agricultural runoff that has raised bacterial pollution levels; improving passage for fish such as sauger and channel cat; removing invasive Russian olive; providing stock water improvements; stabilizing streambanks and channels; improving irrigation efficiency; and protecting productive agricultural lands from development. Some of these activities have already been underway for years. The RCPP funding will allow their continuation and expansion, with the goal of accelerating benefits to both landowners and the watershed.

# Annual Report 2014

(July 1, 2013 - June 30, 2014)



McMeans' conservation easement.



SCLT Board and Staff during our Board Retreat.



View from a proposed trail.



Trail planning on-the-ground.



Red Grade Landowner Open House.



UNPLUG event at South Park.



Soldier Ridge Trail at sunrise.

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



I had a call a few weeks ago from a landowner in Campbell County who was interested in learning more about conservation easement options for his property near Gillete. It's not uncommon for us to receive calls from landowners in adjacent counties and while we're quick to point out that we serve landowners and residents in Sheridan County, we are happy to start them in the right direction. Before this particular caller hung-up, he bemoaned the fact that Campbell County wasn't lucky enough to have its own local land trust.

However, luck isn't the reason SCLT is here. Rather, our work is possible because of the vision and investments of community members like you who realize the value that a local land trust brings to a place. Because of your support, SCLT is able to work on your behalf to protect local landscapes and historic places in Sheridan County for the future, while creating new trails and recreation opportunities for those here now.

Nine years after charting unknown waters, the continued sustainability of SCLT is a testament to our community's foresight. It shows that we remain committed to influencing our future today by investing in projects that pay dividends tomorrow. On behalf of our Board of Directors, I would like to say thank you to the greater Sheridan County community for your continued investment in SCLT. Your support ensures that the place we call home only gets better with time.



Colin Betzler  
Executive Director

Sheridan Community Land Trust works to preserve our heritage of open spaces, healthy rivers and creeks, working ranches, wildlife habitat, and vibrant history, while expanding non-motorized recreation opportunities to connect people with the places they love.



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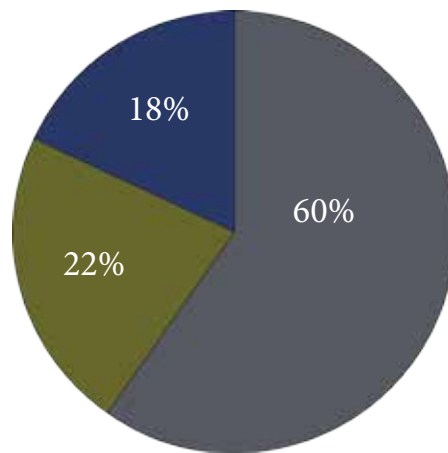
**FY 2014 FINANCIAL SUMMARY**

SCLT's work continues to be made possible through direct support from our community. Over 60% of the funds SCLT received during this past fiscal year were spent directly on developing and managing projects.

I'm pleased to report that SCLT finished Fiscal Year 2014 in a strong financial position, which allows our Board and Staff to continue our work on projects that directly benefit members of our community, as well as the local economy.

**OPERATING EXPENSE**

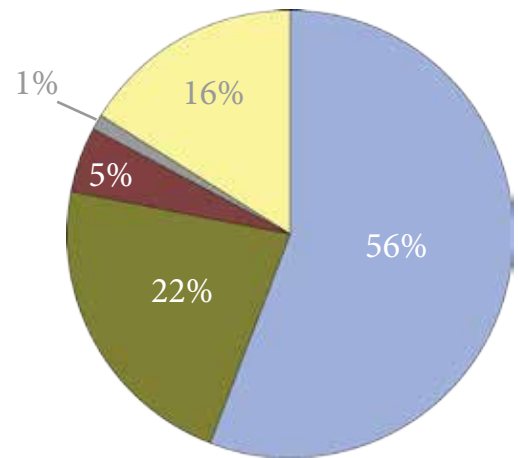
**BY PROGRAM**  
**\$146,135.<sup>97</sup>**



- Project Development  
\$87,647.<sup>22</sup>
- Management & Administration  
\$32,489.<sup>08</sup>
- Fundraising & Communications  
\$26,049.<sup>67</sup>

**OPERATING INCOME**

**BY SOURCE**  
**\$164,887.<sup>12</sup>**



- Individual/Business Members  
\$92,452.<sup>44</sup>
- One Cent Funding  
\$36,420.<sup>50</sup>
- Project Specific Grants/Gifts  
26,152.<sup>45</sup>
- Events, Other  
\$7,972.<sup>87</sup>
- Investments  
\$1,888.<sup>36</sup>

*\*SCLT's most recent tax return (990) is available at our office during regular business hours.*

SCLT continues to adhere to the Land Trust Alliance's Standards and Practices, reviewing our various policies annually for completeness and keeping them up-to-date with any changing requirements, including those pertaining to financial reporting.

Whether you are an annual member, business member, event sponsor, granting entity, government contributor, or individual project donor, you can remain confident that your investment in SCLT continues to be strategically used to protect and enhance the best of Sheridan County for current and future generations.

Susie Ponce, Treasurer

# FY 2014 PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

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## MCMEANS' TONGUE RIVER CONSERVATION EASEMENT

In the second quarter of the fiscal year, we closed on an 80-acre conservation easement with Mike and Vicky McMeans west of Dayton. This process took over a year, as it was Sheridan County's first-ever conservation subdivision.



Looking west across the McMeans' property.

This beautiful property along the Tongue River will remain working ranchland and wildlife habitat forever as a result of this conservation easement. We hope it is the first of many similar projects that combine conservation with smart-growth principles.

## TONGUE RIVER INITIATIVE PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The Tongue River Initiative (TRI) is a partnership conceptualized by SCLT with The Nature Conservancy and Sheridan County Conservation District. Our goal is to preserve the scenic beauty, ranching heritage, and wildlife habitat of the Tongue River Valley, while also working to improve the water quality of the Tongue River.

This fiscal year, TRI produced the Landowner Resource Guide, which is a compilation of information designed to connect landowners in the valley to entities with funding and technical assistance regarding land management practices. The guide was sent to more than 200 landowners and has led to over a dozen conversations about conservation opportunities on properties in the valley. TRI recently received a grant award of \$1.8 million from the National Resource Conservation Service's Regional Conservation Partnership Program, detailed in our Winter 2015 newsletter.

## RED GRADE TRAILS SYSTEM PROJECT DEVELOPMENT



This fiscal year, SCLT announced plans to create a 33-mile trail system on State, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and US Forest Service (USFS) lands along Red Grade Road.

Many hours were spent meeting with landowners and partners to refine and develop the conceptual trail plan. We also spent a considerable amount of time on-the-ground with a professional trail designer creating a master plan and implementing much of the feedback received from local partners and landowners involved with the project.

Our focused work paid off. This fall we were granted a 25-year State lease for trailhead and trail development and look forward to breaking ground on Phase I in 2015. Meanwhile, planning continues for BLM and USFS phases of the project.

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**80 ACRES**

*of agricultural and riparian land protected by conservation easement*

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**123 MILES**

*of trails planned and assessed, including the Red Grade Trails System and the Tongue River Water Trail*

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**1,632 HOURS**

*of volunteer work, including Board Members, work group members, trail stewards, and event volunteers*

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**\$30,591 DOLLARS**

*generously given by our Board of Directors to support our work*

# FY 2014 MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS - THANK YOU!

Donald and Ginette Aasby • Robert and Kathleen Ahrens • Tim and Carol Althausen • Anonymous (4) • Diana Ayers • William and Terri Baas • Sandy Baird • Sandy and Paddy Bard • Ruth Beckwith • Charlotte and Tim Belton • Joan Bennet • Lollie Benz Plank • Robert and Rosie Berger • Charles and Mary Lee Berta • Steve and Cindy Betzler • Francesco Beuf • Big Horn Equestrian Center • John and Susan Bigelow • Frank and Georgia Boley • Amy and Eric Bouley • Thomas and Betsy Bradley • First Interstate Bank - Main St. Branch • Mary Burgess • Terry and Bev Burgess • Maria Burke • Tracey and Renny Burke • Tom and Jody Bush • John and Vanessa Buyok • Kim and Susie Cannon • Julie Carroll • John P. and Virginia Chase • Dave Clarendon • Connie and Carl Clark • Molly Clark • Barbara Cochran • Wendy and Robert Condrat • Clifton and Janice Cook • Steve Copley • Haultain Corbett and Katie Curtiss • Sheridan County • Shirley Coy • Jenny Craft and David Carter • Terry Cram • Don Crecelius and Edith Heyward • Peg Cullen • Elizabeth B. Denison • Richard A. Destefano • Stanley F. and Donna DeVore • Cissy Dillon • Eatons Brothers Inc. • Kerry Eblen • Tom and Donna Elisius • Durwin and Wanda Elliott • Mike and Mary Beth Evers • Duffy Exxon • Wayne and Judith Fahsholtz • Dr. and Mrs. John T. Fallon, III • Karen and Bill Ferguson • Mrs. Robert Ferril • First Interstate Bank Foundation • Spike and Jo Forbes • Trish and Cam Forbes • Karen Fosher • Ann Fuller • Joanne Garnett • Joe and Lin Gilbert • Allison Ginn • Daniel and Ruth Goodenough • David and Helen Haile • Corey and Stacy Hamrick • Penny Sue Hanify • Ken and Helen Harmon • Kate Harrington • Lynn and Diane Hegy • Mark and Tammy Heid • Lee Helvey • David and Jenny Heuck • John Heyneman and Arin Waddell • Debra Hill • Gerald Hill • Ephraim Jackson and Dianne Hobbs • Kathy Hosford • Jane Clark and Philip Huckins • Jock and Judith Hutton • Judy and Daryl Jennings • Matt and Lorraine Johnston • Patty Kemper and Neil Anderson • Dick and Cathi Kindt • Mark and Tibbee Kinner • Chris and Sara Kirol • Bill Bensel and Kristina Korfanta • Karl and Toni Kukuchka • Gina Carroll & Jason A. Lanka • Christine Love • Kim and Mary Kay Love • Marie Lowe • D. A. Lozinski • Laura and Martin MacCarty • Stephen and Edre Maier • Joan Skewes-Cox Malone • Jason Martineau and Emily Emond • Kary Matthews • Carol and Sam Paul Mavrakis • David McClintock • Jim and Doreen McElvany • Mike and Vicky McMeans • John and Mary Ellen McWilliams • Cory Medill • Sarah, Tom, and Kellen Mentock • Susanna and David Meyer • Brian and Linnea Mirsch • Peter and Cynthia Mohseni • Brent & Elizabeth Moore • Sally and Mike Morton • Jim Nelson • Scott Newbold and Julie Rieder • Mike and Julie Nickel • Randi Lou and TJ Nickel • David and Karen Nicolarsen • Bret Noecker • Norcross Foundation • Rick and Cynthia Pallister • Carol and Mike Pastore-Watkins • David A. Paullin • David and Cathy Paullin • Kay Pearson • Jack Pelissier • Anne Pendergast • George and Nancy Pfeiffer • Bob and Gerry Phillips • Jerilea and Todd Phillips • Robb and Lisa Pike • Shiva Polefka • Pfizer Foundation • Pat and Hal Quist • Theresa Rice • Ken and Patty Richardson • Daniel and Rosemary Rieder • Bob and Colleen Rolston • Tom and Barbara Sachse • Luke and Stephanie Sander • M. Stacy Page and R. L. Sanders • John and Constance Sargent • Terry and Susan Savage • Polly Saywell • J. and Claudia Schaeffer • Rick and Joyce Schmidt • Curt and Linda Schwamb • David and Lacie Schwend • Emerson Scott III • Homer and Janet Scott • Homer A. and Mildred S. Scott Foundation • Sam Scott • Dixie See • City of Sheridan • Dawn Sopron • Brian Kuehl and Michelle Sullivan • Sandra Suzor • Dr. Wendell and Martha Swatt-Robison • Hardy and Patsy Tate • Margie Taylor • Gina Thoney • Larry and Nancy Thoney • Bryan Todd • Karen Turner • Kathy and Ron Vanderhoef • Tom Varcalli • Anne and Darracott Vaughan • Joan and Bob Wallick • Sarah Wallick and Aaron Denberg • Isabel Wallop • Barbara and Charles Walter • Chris Walton and Tammara Duhn • Leon Washut • Milton & Cynthia Wiest • Kentz and Lindsey Willis • Kathryn Wilson • Roger and Fachon Wilson • Tod and Marjorie Windsor • J.A. Woollam Foundation • Victor and Kate Yapuncich

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**Tribute Gifts:** Shiva Polefka *in honor of* Kathleen and Daniel Weber • Jolene Forbes *in honor of* Storie Nelle Betzler

**All donor gifts reflect contributions received July 1, 2013 - June 30, 2014. If your name is missing or incorrect we sincerely apologize for the error. Please notify us of any corrections by calling (307)673-4702 or [claire@sheridanclt.org](mailto:claire@sheridanclt.org).**

# Former Board Members Reflect On Their Time with SCLT



*Mark Kinner*

*SCLT's bylaws limit Board Member terms to nine years and as a result, Mark Kinner stepped down this past December. Mark served as President for four years and successfully guided many SCLT projects. He played a pivotal role in shaping the organization into what it is today.*

### **In his own words:**

Growing up in Connecticut, it was all too easy to notice farmland that I had worked on being lost to poorly-planned development. For several summers I also worked on a trail crew and saw firsthand the positive impact land conservation and recreational access had on local communities.

**“I love the recreation projects SCLT has completed in our community...we’re leaving it a better place for the future.”**

These experiences convinced me that I needed to be involved in my own community to shape its future in a positive way. Joining SCLT’s Board in its infancy presented an opportunity to do just that in the place my family and I call home.

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*SCLT's bylaws limit Board Member terms to nine years and as a result, Sally Morton stepped down this past December. Sally provided crucial expertise for conservation easements and valuable fundraising support, increasing SCLT's capacity.*

### **In her own words:**

I was fortunate to work for the Wyoming Chapter of The Nature Conservancy for twelve years. In that role I met numerous landowners, policy makers and citizens as we worked to conserve land and water in NE Wyoming, so it was a natural step into the role of SCLT board member.

I love the diversified mission of SCLT. It serves so many in Sheridan County, addressing several focus areas at the same time. Whether you are interested in historic preservation, recreation, or the wildlife and natural beauty of Sheridan County, you are represented by SCLT.

I am proud to have been associated with this organization that has become recognized as a valuable asset in our community. It is the exceptional efforts of the staff and board members and the support of county residents that made this happen. It has been wonderful to be part of the evolution of this organization.



*Sally Morton*

**“One of my favorite SCLT projects is the Soldier Ridge Trail. It provides many with the opportunity to be out in the western hills of the county, face to face with the Bighorn Mountains and our magnificent ranch lands.”**



P.O. Box 7185  
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Please pass our newsletter on to a friend, recycle it, or let us know if you'd rather not receive a paper copy to help us reduce waste and costs. Thank you!

**Annual Open House**  
**Tuesday, March 10<sup>th</sup>**  
**6 pm - 9 pm (Free, open to the public)**  
**52 S Main St. - Downstairs from SCLT office**

Join us after work for appetizers, drinks, and good company! We'll have some unique raffle prizes you won't want to miss - from local farm fare to fishing and other guided outdoor trips. You'll also get the inside scoop on 2015 projects. Hope to see you all there!



The crowd enjoying last year's Open House at the Sheridan Inn.

**SAVE THE DATE!**

