

Sheridan.
Community
LAND TRUST

YESTERDAY.
TODAY.
FOREVER.



Annual Report and Highlights July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017

“How does one put value on an experience like watching a fox bound across a meadow, or breathing in fresh mountain air as you walk along the trails?”

– Sally Morton, Big Horn



photo by MY Bonnie Studios

Conservation steps forward

You're changing lives and building a love of the land

Not that long ago it was a lot harder to experience the beauty and magic of nature along the foothills of the Bighorn Mountains.

For some, it was difficult because of their busy family lives – there wasn't a lot of time to travel far to hike, or to take a scenic drive amidst the beauty of Sheridan County's iconic ranches and farmlands.

For others, like many of the kids in our elementary schools, it just wasn't part of their day. It's not that they didn't want to go outside – these were the kids who wiggled in their seats at school and gazed longingly out the window, their minds drifting away from their work – it's just that there wasn't an easy, timely, or regular way to get them there.

But that's changed. Over the past 15 months, thanks to you and growing community support, we collectively took a giant step forward with the opening of a new section of Red Grade Trails.

And people love them.

Kids becoming immersed in nature

Teachers from Big Horn and Sheridan schools now actively use Red Grade Trails as an outdoor laboratory and classroom, while outdoor clubs run or bike on the trails. Youth camps use Red Grade Trails during the summer as the spot to inspire kids about local history, geology, wildlife, and pollinators.

This was true during an Unplug event hosted by Sheridan Community Land Trust and Science

Kids when local naturalist Steve Dudley stood on the dirt trails and helped point out a few of the animals and plants that live there. Each child was able to see something new, whether it was a native grass or a bird they'd never noticed before.

This is where the love of nature starts; close to the mountains, or in wide-open spaces and the imaginations of our youth.

A community trail

With the opening of the new trail, more and more people on foot can now enjoy the intricacies of the landscape right in front of their eyes. Red Grade Trails is a place that allows anyone to enjoy a Wyoming sunset, or a moment of solitude in nature, just minutes from home.

The trail isn't just for youth or athletes, either.

It's providing a way for elders or those who aren't physically able to hike in the higher elevations a chance to get outdoors. People like Bob May, who

has lived here in Sheridan for thirty years, but no longer can hike up into the mountains or drive over to Buffalo. "This is an amazing gift." Bob says, "For me and my friends, we never thought we'd get back into the mountains like this given our age."

Scientist Stephen Jay Gould once said that people will only fight for that which they love – and research shows he's right. That means if we want Sheridan County to retain these special places, we must make sure that people have a chance to fall in love with them.

And that's what is happening, thanks to you.

As Sally Morton said recently, "How does one put value on an experience like watching a fox bound across a meadow, or the opportunity to breathe in fresh mountain air as you walk along the trails?"

We know. It's called the value of community. Thank you.

Did you know?

Unstructured time outdoors – like playing in a stream, building a fort in the gully, running free in an open field, or spending time hunting and fishing – enhances the health of our kids.

Research from the Kaiser Family Foundation has documented that time outside is critical for the emotional, intellectual, and social development of children. The land we conserve now – and the opportunities we create for kids to get out and experience it – will be vital for the children of today, and the communities they will lead tomorrow.

Thanks to your commitment over the years there are now two trail systems just a short drive from home – Soldier Ridge and Red Grade Trails. It's a great start. You see, just like that, you are shaping the future.



Ranchland magic

Local rancher conserves his land for the love of wildlife

John and his wife Vanessa own the Buyok Ranch along the Tongue River, a property that's been cared for by the Buyok family for nearly a hundred years.

They love this place and if you bring up wildlife with John, get ready to smile, because he'll likely tell you a story. Last time we saw him, it was a story of surprises, as John tells it, and one that makes you realize that ranching is interwoven with watching the land.

"One morning I saw a coyote headed down the slope toward one of the calves. I thought for sure there'd be trouble", John remembered with a chuckle.

"Sure enough, the coyote started after the calf. They headed off in one direction, and came back the other way a minute later – but the calf was chasing the coyote this time. Those two ran around for quite a while before the coyote headed off, just playing the whole time..."

A precious place

This winter, John and Vanessa have been watching a porcupine take up residence in a cottonwood tree a few hundred yards south of their house. "It's a big tree and he doesn't seem to be doing much damage, so we're leaving him alone," John says.

After a fresh snow, John often sees tracks from bobcat, fox, or mink who were circling the porch

in search of cottontails and mice hunkered below. By conserving their land the Buyoks have provided their cattle, and Bald and Golden Eagles, Ospreys, Peregrine Falcons, Prairie Falcons, American Kestrels, a multitude of different hawks, and owls...to name a few, a place to call home for the future.

“As a rancher, I value the wildlife as much as my own livestock. Preserving the wildlife habitat on the property was the main reason we wanted a conservation agreement. Wildlife have a home here – and they’re the reason we like having a home here too. Knowing that we’ve protected this habitat for future litters, pods, flocks, and herds – it’s a pretty good feeling.”

Thanks to the support of our members, last year we were able to work with ranching families throughout Sheridan to explore if conservation is right for them. It’s the compassion and conviction of ranchers like John and Vanessa that make so much of Sheridan County’s land conservation work a reality.



Three ways you can help local ranchers

1. Encourage others to shop locally, too: No matter where you buy your groceries or eat meals out, tell the owners of these places that you would like to buy locally-sourced foods – even if it means paying a few cents more.
2. Support 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA) by attending their livestock showings at the Sheridan County Fair, or donating to the cash prizes. These kids are the future of ranching and farming.
3. Support local, regional, and federal funding initiatives to conserve local farms and ranches – it’s often a critical way to pass the ranch to the next generation.



A visionary neighborhood

Landowners conserve heritage, family values, and a way of life

One of the most beautiful drives in Sheridan County is along Bird Farm Road, late in the spring after days of rain. Vibrant green grasses blanket the rolling hills that stretch out as far as your eye can see – clear to the mountains backed by a bluebird sky.

This drive – and this neighborhood – is a staple of Sheridan County. If you've driven out to the fireworks show at the Equestrian Center or gone for a Sunday drive just for fun, you know the feeling of being surrounded by this beautiful landscape.

That's something we can't take for granted. These lands might be much different if not for the conviction and leadership of the land-owning families who live in this neighborhood.

One of these families is the Harts of McCormick Creek who recently conserved their ranch with Sheridan Community Land Trust.

The Harts followed in the footsteps of the Flying H Ranch and the Paul Denison family property, both of which are conserved in partnership with The Nature Conservancy. Just a stone's throw away, the Clarendon family established a conservation agreement with Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust nearly a decade ago.

These families chose their conservation organizations because of the specific missions and strategies they offer. To provide the best service, all of these organizations – including Sheridan Community Land Trust – work in partnership with one another and with the families to make sure the families can



photo by Ericole Bataille

choose the organization that is best suited for the them, the future of the land, and the community.

“It’s wonderful for us to be part of the ranching community that is stepping up to preserve our county’s agricultural and wildlife heritage, and so personally satisfying to know that the land will be protected forever,” shared Charlie Hart.

The work of these neighbors in the Bighorn foothills has resulted in thousands of acres being protected for future generations, rather than risking being lost from agriculture through development.

Not what you might think

“Often ranchers think that by conserving your land, you can’t do anything with it,” remarked Charlie Hart of McCormick Creek.

“That’s not the case” he continued. “When I approached Sheridan Community Land Trust about an agreement, I did so because there’s strategy behind it, and it’s flexible. For us, the conservation

agreement didn’t restrict the type of agriculture we practice at all. In fact, it protected it. Sometimes people are surprised to learn we, as conservation landowners, still own our land and pay taxes on it.”

While Charlie originally chose this land as a place to hunt as he did as a young boy, his appreciation for it has grown in other ways. He now enjoys knowing that his home is also a home for migrating elk in the spring and fall.

Heritage, and western values, run deep in this community and Charlie’s love for the area reflects that when he explains, “My love for this land continues to deepen each day. Over the years, it’s become more than just hunting for me – it’s also about ranching this property with the idea of keeping its beauty for future generations.”

In the coming year, the Land Trust will be working with several more families to explore if conservation is right for them. Families continue to own, manage, and pay taxes on lands they have conserved.



The most special gift of all Volunteers spread soil, love, and momentum

Can you imagine what it means to volunteer your time to help make conservation a reality?

A lot of people in our community can – and they are doing just that. Each year they give the most special gifts of all: time, talent, and a genuine love of making our community a better place, and for that we are so grateful.

Last year was particularly amazing.

With each mile of new trail, we need to grow our team to help care for the trails and to ensure that they are providing great experiences for everyone. This past year volunteers helped to manage ten miles of hiking, biking and horseback riding trails on both public and private lands at Red Grade and Soldier Ridge Trails, respectively. And they did this work for the enjoyment of all.

Without these hard-working, fun, and creative folks we couldn't provide these destinations to the community.

And dirt trails are just the beginning. A special thanks to the businesses and school kids who helped pull trash from the river and ponds into their kayaks and canoes this summer, helping make our waters safer and healthier.

We also want to express a huge thank you to all the volunteers who helped lead trips, hikes, and educational programs; assisted with events; donated food for programs; provided photographs; and worked with us in the office. You are the engine that ensures that conservation inspires more people, every day.

This is what local conservation looks like.



All year round, volunteers make our trails longer, our views prettier, and our days brighter. Check out the list of everyone who volunteered on page 15. It's a great crew to be a part of.

Would you like to partner or volunteer with us? We're looking for you.

If you think you'd like to be a trail volunteer, please contact Tami Sorenson, our Trails Manager, at trails@sheridanclt.org or 307-751-0735.

If you'd like to help in other ways – with events, contributing photographs, assisting with programs, helping in our office, or hosting community gatherings or cleanups – please contact Katie Belton at katie@sheridanclt.org or 307-673-4702.

"I always have a blast when I'm helping out on the trails. My kids love it too, and they will grow up knowing that they helped make Sheridan even better."

– Lissa Bertalot, Sheridan



Running a business, caring for the community

Every business, big and small, can make a difference here

You might see Caryn walking her dogs on Red Grade Trails, or biking gravel roads surrounded by the area's ranchland. Most likely, however, you'll see her at Purenergy Fitness, a local business she owns with her husband Nolan, a Sheridan native from a ranching family. As Caryn tells it, Nolan and the amazing landscapes were the reasons Caryn moved to Sheridan twelve years ago.

"I knew immediately when I came here that I wanted to move to Sheridan. It has a unique ranching history and foothills location. When I started my business, I wanted to help conserve the character of the area as we grow as a community. We believe land and water is important for our health and well-being, and our economic future."

Caryn is not alone. Local businesses are stepping up to make sure that Sheridan is a great place to live, work, and play. Over the past year, Caryn and the team at Purenergy helped sponsor the Biketoberfest fundraiser for trails, assisted with events, volunteered staff time, and spread the word about events and fundraisers on social media.

"The local trails are a game-changer," says Caryn. "Because of their proximity to town, people who live or work in town can take a lunch break run or bike ride. For me, I love to go out with my dogs on Soldier Ridge or Red Grade Trails."

Local businesses are increasingly motivated to support conservation – and Caryn and Purenergy are a great example of this leadership.

For Caryn and many members of her gym, a big part of healthy lifestyle and community means increasing opportunities to stay active outside, close to home.

"I know, as a business owner, that the money and time I contribute goes directly toward conserving special land, creating trails, and maintaining a sense of place around Sheridan County. I know it because I'm seeing it happen before my eyes – and it rocks!"

Check out pages 14 and 15 for other businesses that volunteer and support local conservation.



photo by MYBonnie Studios

A river trail that supports ranching, wildlife, and this community

We are blessed as a county: including Little Goose Creek, Big Goose Creek, and the Tongue River, there are nearly ninety-two miles of water that can be floated here. Together, these miles form the fledgling Tongue River Water Trail.

Over the past several years, Sheridan Community Land Trust has been working in partnership with landowners, community members, and The Nature Conservancy and Sheridan County Conservation District to care for these waters. We are working to improve river health without impeding private property rights, and while still providing water access for livestock.

As a result, there are now portions of these rivers where riprap has been removed, and habitat

restored, to allow wildlife, recreationalists, and the ranching community to simultaneously tap into the vital water that flows through our county.

These partnerships have allowed kayakers, canoeists, inner-tubers, and even skiers, to head down the rivers when the conditions are right.

In the coming year, we will be looking for additional water trail ranching partners; funding may be available for fencing and habitat restoration work. If you'd like to learn more about the water trail as a recreationalist, donor, or as a rancher or landowner please contact Brad Bauer at director@sheridanclt.org. There's an amazing opportunity ahead of us.



Your gift inspires our community, conserves the lands you love

Do you want to make sure that healthy rivers and creeks, abundant wildlife, and the county's farms and ranchlands are here for generations to come?

You can help by making a planned gift. It's a great way to take care of your family and those you love while creating a way for conservation to last. For example, you can:

- Leave a gift in your will. No amount is too small – all amounts help protect the future of Sheridan County. It's easy to do, too.
- Create a trust that takes care of your spouse and family and then transfers funds to SCLT.
- Make a gift of real estate that we keep, protect, or sell to help conserve other lands and establish programs. This can be a home, business, rural or urban property, or parcel of land.

There are many additional gift options to choose from, and we are happy to help you find what feels right for you. If you are interested in making a planned gift, please contact Brad at director@sheridanclt.org. All conversations are confidential.

Because conservation can't wait Hats off to monthly conservation heroes

Maybe it's the rancher who has questions about conservation, the family who wants to sell their land and protect it first, or the wildlife habitat that needs to be restored. Maybe it's the child who longs for the mountains and waters...

The bottom line is that conservation needs to continue all year long and monthly donors are making that happen. Monthly giving is a great way to make a big impact, no matter the size of your gift. It's easy and safe and provides a great way to spread your passion over the course of the year.

To find out more about how you can support local conservation and trail efforts and become a monthly donor, visit our website at sheridanclt.org or call Katie at 673-4702 if you have questions. Thank you to our monthly donors, listed on the following page.

Thank you for making conservation a reality

Revenue 2016 – 2017



Foundations and Grants	\$410,039
Individual and Business Contributions	\$268,762
Investment Income	\$52,030
Fundraising Events	\$15,202
Other income	\$4,012
Total	\$750,045

Expenses 2016 – 2017



Program Services	\$514,535
Fundraising	\$57,791
Administration	\$53,548
Total	\$625,874

Sheridan Community Land Trust is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. These figures reflect the fiscal year July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017.

Thanks to all of you who made this the best year for co

Every year, with your support, we can count on a little more of Sheridan County's herita

Individual, Businesses, Organizations, Foundations, and Volunteers from fiscal year July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017.*

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"I smile when I think of all that has been conserved, and the kids who get to enjoy those trails..."

– Roger Wilson, Sheridan; SCLT member for 10 years

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Conservation yet.

Large and special places being here for today, for tomorrow, and for future generations.

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*"When I think of all I have learned, and gained, from volunteering – it's me who feels fortunate."
– Lisa Reeves, Sheridan, office and event volunteer*

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Bomber Mountain Cycling Club
Boy Scouts of America
Fletcher Construction
Fort McKenzie High School
Malone Belton Abel Architects
Montana-Dakota Utilities
SCLT Board and Working Groups
Sheridan County Conservation District
Tom Balding Bits & Spurs
Wyoming Game and Fish

*** denotes Visionary Circle gifts of \$1000 or more.
Green denotes volunteer time of 100 hours or more.
*Don't see your name? Let us know! We want to make sure you're properly thanked – and sorry to miss you.





PO Box 7185 (mailing)
52 South Main Street (physical)
Sheridan, Wyoming 82801
307.673.4702

www.sheridanclt.org

 Sheridan Community Land Trust

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at www.sheridanclt.org

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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Come out to celebrate!

SCLT Annual Open House

Thursday, March 8th from 5pm to 7pm
Luminous Brewhouse
504 Broadway Street in Sheridan

Bring your friends and family to spend time with the wonderfully vibrant community supporting Sheridan Community Land Trust. You can enjoy an evening of free food and drink, plus awesome raffle prizes donated by generous local individuals and businesses.

If you'd like to donate a raffle item for the event, please call us!

Photos, unless otherwise noted, have been generously donated by Tim Doolin, an outstanding local photographer. We appreciate his generosity and commitment to conservation. For more information, visit his website at timdoolinphotography.com.