



Sheridan
Community
LAND TRUST

Annual Report and Highlights July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019



Bringing the forest down the mountain to you

Red Grade Trails plan for safe, sustainable trails approved

The Bighorn mountains have been a place of beauty and wonder for as long as people have lived in Wyoming. Now, thanks to the US Forest's approval of our Red Grade Trails proposal, more people will have new opportunities to experience the beauty and wonder of the Bighorns than ever before.

Recently, the US Forest service approved Sheridan Community Land Trust's (SCLT) proposal to create 15 miles of recreational trails along the east slope of the Bighorns in proximity to Red Grade Road.

"These trails mean new opportunities for people to bike, new opportunities for people to hike, and new opportunities to ride horses in an area of the Bighorn National Forest that was more difficult

for the community to access," remarked Brad Bauer, SCLT Executive Director.

The 15 miles of proposed natural-surface, single-track, non-motorized trails will extend up and out from the existing six miles of Red Grade Trails. The proposed network will include trails dedicated to hiking, biking, and equestrians, as well as many miles of shared-use trail.

"By making it easier for people to experience the Bighorns' beauty without having to take a vehicle all the way up Red Grade Road, these trails will bring the forest down the mountain to more people," he reasoned.

Bauer explained that safety and sustainability were important drivers behind the plan. While SCLT's



Trailfest 2019 was enjoyed by many this August. SCLT is very excited to build upon the event in 2020!

trails will be new, they will allow existing dead-end trails and often erosion-prone social trails to be decommissioned. Similarly, three dedicated parking areas and trailheads will be developed in places already used by motorists on their way up the mountain. That, he pointed out, will help minimize dangerous interactions between vehicles and people.

While the new trails promise exciting opportunities for residents and visitors alike, Bauer stressed that SCLT will build trails only after final designs and funds for complete sections are secure. He hopes construction begins as early as the 2020 season.

The cost and timeline to build safe, sustainable trails will be greatly reduced thanks to a partnership with EMIT Technologies. In July, the Sheridan-based company announced it would purchase and donate a mini-excavator, trailer and tools so SCLT could bring a dedicated trail builder on-staff as the land trust responds to a strong community desire for non-motorized recreation trails close to home.

Since October, more than 10,500 visitors have utilized SCLT's trail network to hike, bike, run, walk, watch wildlife, ride horses, look at flowers, or just relax and enjoy the majestic views of open spaces unique to Sheridan County.

Bauer said he's thankful for all the people who helped develop and review SCLT's proposal, the careful consideration USFS personnel employed in reviewing the plan, and all of the people who took time to provide input throughout all stages of the comment and review process.

"The proposal is about new opportunities," Bauer said and concluded. "We're excited we'll soon be able to provide those new opportunities for hikers, new opportunities for bikers, and new opportunities for horseback riders and for many other non-motorized users to explore and enjoy the beauty of the Bighorns."

To help create new opportunities for more people to experience the Bighorns' beauty, please consider a donation. For your convenience, a remittance envelope is included in this annual report.



First line of defense

Interns help slow spread of invasive Ventenata, Medusahead

It's nearing noon on a hot August day. The cattle creep close to the trees scattered along the draw as the summer sun beats down on prime Parkman pasture. Midway up the hillside, Matt Springsteen and Connor Land are walking through the grass. "Here's some!" Connor shouts. It's a patch of Ventenata. Matt records the GPS coordinates of the location on his tablet and the two continue on.

Moments like that typified Connor and Matt's summer as invasive grass interns, a new partnership between SCLT and Sheridan County Weed & Pest Control District (SCWP) made possible by a grant from the Dan and Jeanne Scott Family Foundation.

For SCLT, it was an exciting opportunity to help preserve working ranches and wildlife habitat all in one fell swoop. For SCWP, it was opportunity to better understand where invasive grasses are growing and reach out to ranchers and landowners.

As interns, Matt and Connor were tasked with being part of the first line of defense Sheridan County has against two potentially disastrous invasive grasses - Ventenata and Medusahead. The two grasses have made inroads in Wyoming, with Ventenata spreading across all of Sheridan County and the portions of Campbell and Johnson counties north of I-90, and Medusahead located primarily around Ranchester and Dayton with a few patches confirmed outside of Big

Horn.

Luke Sander, SCWP Supervisor, called the two invasives Cheatgrass' "bigger, badder brothers." "Take away the few redeeming values of Cheatgrass and you've got Ventenata and Medusahead."

Both grasses are almost purpose-built to be problems for livestock and wildlife. Their high silicon content makes them virtually inedible. Sander noted that pasture infested by these grasses loses up to 70% of its forage value. Beyond that, their thick thatch chokes out other plants and their shallow roots dry the soil, dramatically increasing fire frequency.

"These grasses occupy less than 5% of suitable habitat," Sander said. "If we can keep them from spreading, we can save a lot of time in the future."

That's where Matt and Connor came in. Sander explained how the two interns were dispatched

to suspected sites after SCWP received calls from ranchers and landowners. They developed a keen eye for grasses, which go dormant earlier than natives.

“It’s a very distinct color from the rest of the grasses. You look for white, shiny patches,” Connor said as he pointed patches out on the hillside.

Their work helps SCWP determine where future treatment needs to occur. Sander said he’s had good success with Esplanade, a root inhibitor that works in the top half inch of soil. It’s effective against annual grasses, but spares perennials. In a collaboration with the University of Wyoming, Sander was pleased to report forage increases two to three times after treatment, which helps make the cost pencil out. So far, about 9,000 acres, including buffer areas around

known plots, have been treated for Medusahead and Ventenata.



Connor Land holds a handful of Ventenata, one of two invasive grasses he spent the summer locating around Sheridan County.

When not in the field, Matt and Connor set up shop in ag businesses, post offices, and at public gatherings to share what they’d learned with landowners. That, Sander said, could prove to be the most important part of their work because the interns helped give people the tools they need to identify grasses the SCWP supervisor characterized as “the greatest invasive threat to Wyoming.”

If you suspect you’ve spotted Ventenata or Medusahead, please report it. “Err on the side of caution,” Sander advised. “Contact us so we can ID it as quickly as possible.” SCWP can be reached at 672-3740. SCLT can be reached at 673-4702.

Create your legacy by caring for what you love

Susan Holmes loves to take her dog up Red Grade Trails, look out at an open viewshed to see fields full of deer and antelope and turkeys and sandhill cranes craning their necks to the ground for fresh alfalfa shoots (and itinerant insects) alongside herds of cattle. After all, that’s an iconic image of Sheridan County. “It’s the best place I’ve ever lived,” she said.

But Susan knows that view is something she can’t take for granted. Which is why she’s spent so much time rolling up her sleeves helping make the place we all call home even better.

She followed SCLT in its early days and soon saw there was a lot to like. “Access to recreation, open spaces, and history are all often undervalued or overlooked in land planning and economic analyses,” she reasoned. True. While assigning a dollar value to what Susan sees every



Susan Holmes loves hikes into the beautiful Bighorns. Caring for what she loves led her to choose a legacy gift to SCLT.

time she takes her dog up Red Grade Trails isn’t easy, assigning a value to what it means in your soul is.

So, Susan chose to contribute to what she loves. She sent a check during fund drives. She was asked to join the board. In January, she becomes SCLT President. Her contributions continue, and will continue because she chose to make a Legacy Circle gift.

“It was pretty clear, SCLT’s mission aligns with my personal values,” Susan remarked, explaining why she chose to include SCLT in her estate plan, “It’s a huge value to me to ensure that mission continues so that Sheridan County continues to be the best place anyone can live.”

To learn more about how you can create your legacy by caring for what you love as a Legacy Circle member, please contact Brad at director@sheridanclt.org. All conversations are confidential.



A truly trailblazing partnership

EMIT's donation will allow trails to be built quicker, for less

It's rare that something can be called truly trailblazing, but a partnership between Sheridan Community Land Trust and EMIT promises to be exactly that. This summer, EMIT announced that it has purchased and donated a mini excavator, trailer, and tools to Sheridan Community Land Trust, which will be used to build new recreation trails in Sheridan County.

"When it comes to our community, EMIT will continue to work towards making this an even better place. The work SCLT is doing to provide recreation trails and connect people with the places they love is vital to keeping our community strong," said Casey D. Osborn, CEO of EMIT.

"Moving forward, local trained volunteers can help make a significant impact to trail development in Sheridan County," he reasoned.

The partnership was announced during the Hidden Hootenanny, which celebrated the opening of Hidden

Hoot Trail, the latest addition to a growing suite of non-motorized recreation trails built and maintained by Sheridan Community Land Trust.

Brad Bauer, SCLT Executive Director, explained how the partnership with EMIT can prove to be a game-changer for everyone who enjoys hiking, biking, horseback riding, and many other outdoor activities in Sheridan County.

"EMIT's first question to us was how SCLT could build trails quicker. By providing the equipment needed to build safe, sustainable trails, EMIT has eliminated one of the largest costs in building trail," he related.

As a result, Bauer said, EMIT's donation allowed SCLT to find a creative solution to another large cost by bringing a dedicated trail builder on staff," Bauer said.

The desire for more non-motorized outdoor opportunities continues to grow locally. This spring, two-thirds of respondents to a Sheridan Parks & Recreation survey said walking and bike trails were their top recreation priority. That's 20% greater than the second-highest priority and about 20% greater than the national average. Open space trails finished third among respondents.



Volunteer Rich Garrison gets some practice with the mini excavator under the tutelage of Scott Kirschner, EMIT's Director of Facilities. The mini excavator was delivered on October 2.

meet the community's demand for non-motorized trails more quickly and more efficiently.

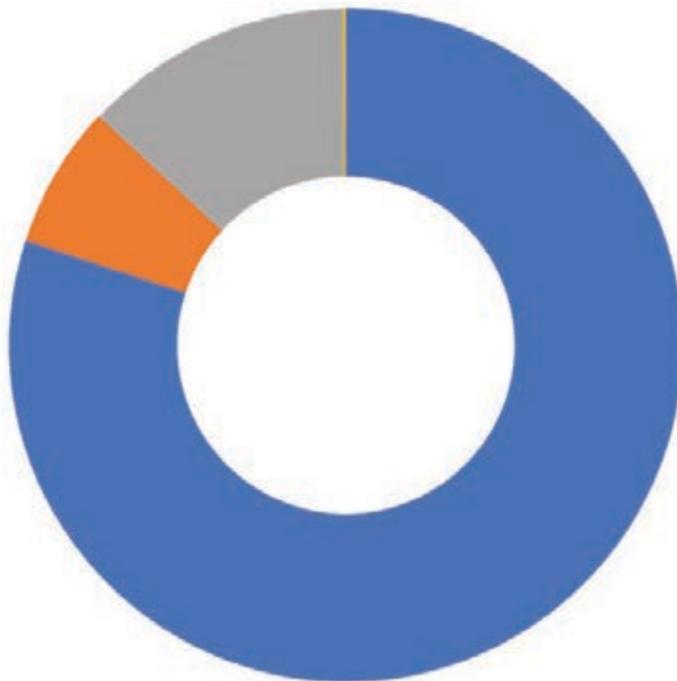
"Because of this partnership with EMIT, we will be able to build more trail for less cost and create a new job in Sheridan County," Bauer relayed, concluding, "Most importantly, EMIT's generosity results

Bauer noted the partnership will allow SCLT to

in a gift the entire community can enjoy."

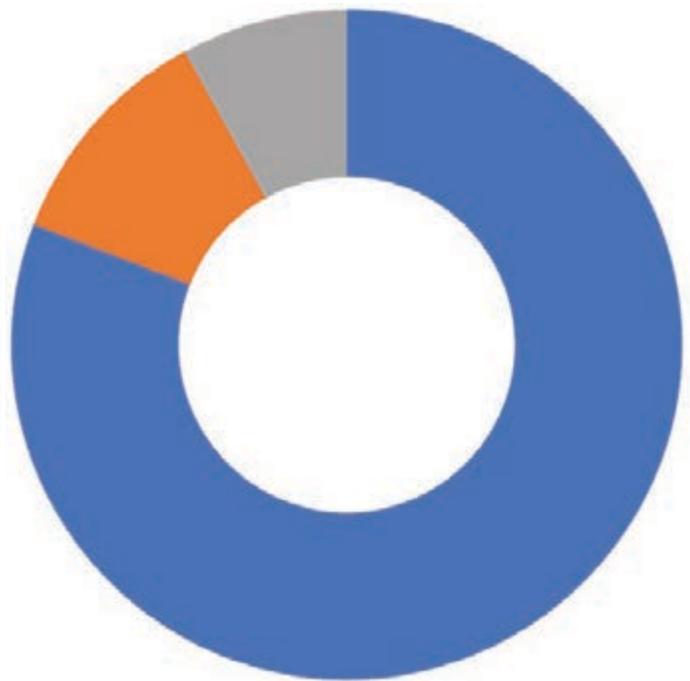
Fiscal Year 2019 Financial Data (July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019)

Revenue



Donor Contributions - \$505,148 - 80%
Investment Income - \$81,910 - 13%
Government Grants - \$43,333 - 7%
Other - \$838 - 0%

Expenses



Program Services - \$456,365 - 81%
Administration - \$62,853 - 11%
Fundraising - \$45,327 - 8%

Thanks to everyone 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, 2018 to June 30, 2019.

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conservation yet.

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

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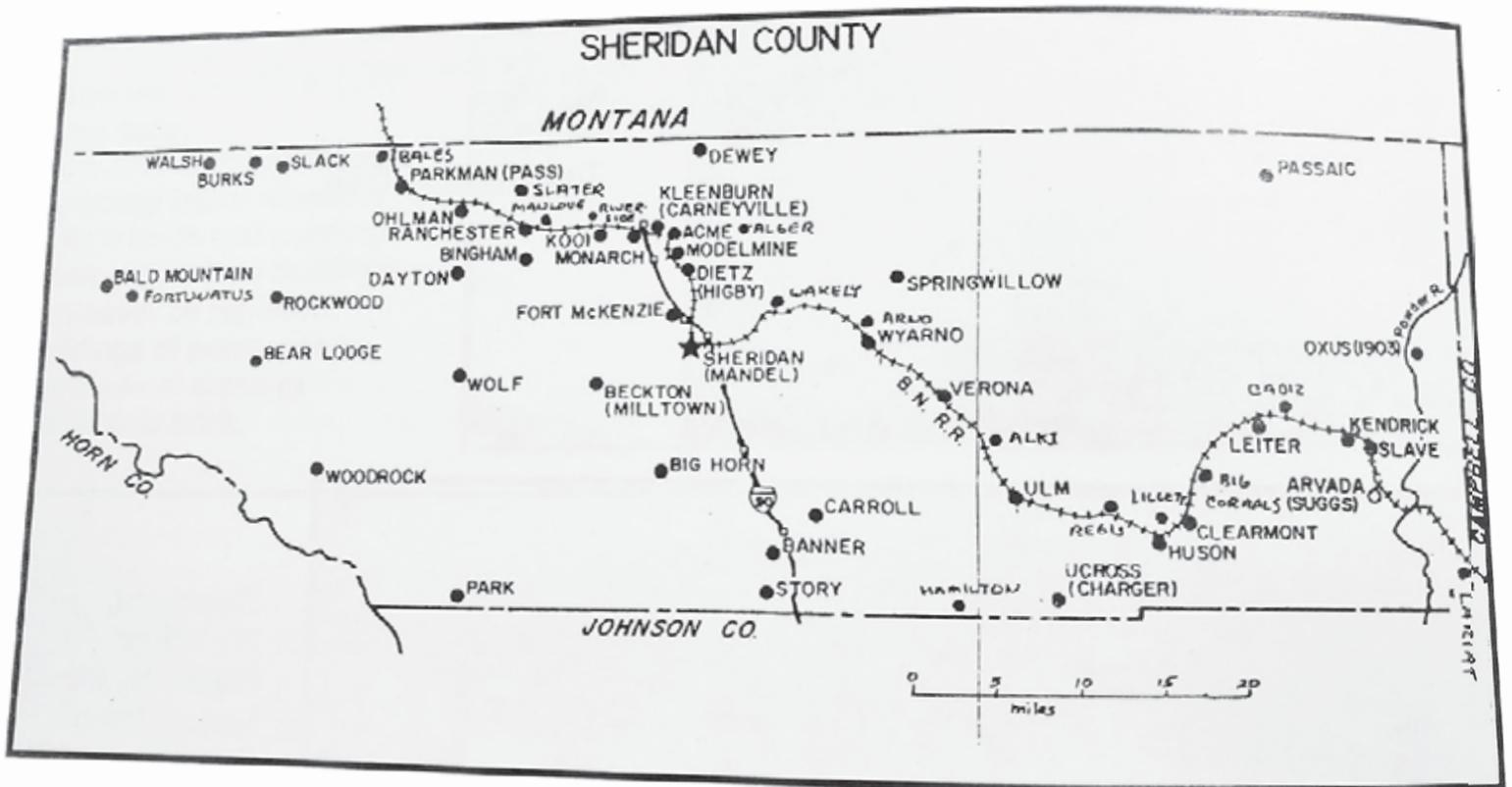
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** Contributor lists are up to date
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recognized in the 2020 Annual
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***If you do not see your name,
please contact us. We want to
ensure you receive the recognition
you've earned.



A map of historic communities included in the Billie Little book “Sheridan County History: Going, Going, Gone?” A Wyoming Humanities Council Spark Grant will spark the creation of a web-based and virtual tour highlighting the history of human migration in southeast Sheridan County.

Making history, one project at a time

In July, Carrie Edinger joined SCLT as an AmeriCorps Historical Education VISTA. She’s hit the range running and has a number of branding irons in the proverbial camp fire.

As Edinger was updating information about the historic Doc Huson homestead, she became fascinated with the history of the community-that-briefly-was, Huson. Her deeper research into the dearly departed town and stopovers along the railroad inspired her to develop a way to tell that story.

In September, Carrie was awarded a \$2,000 Wyoming Humanities Council Spark Grant to create Human Migration of Southeast Sheridan County, a web-based and virtual tour that will tell the tale of humanity’s time in the region, from the first American Indians, to the trappers, homesteaders, miners, and ranchers of the 19th Century, up through today. That tour will be completed and ready to enjoy in summer 2020.

Similarly, we’re pleased Sen. Dave Kinskey has graciously donated his time to reprise his role as narrator of the award-winning Black Diamond Trail audio tour. A thank you to Sheridan Media

for donating studio time and expertise to record Kinskey. The updates cover the Acme power plant and its restoration efforts. The updated tour will be available soon through the TravelStorys App.

Carrie has also been conducting research and interviews to develop a walking tour of the City of Sheridan Pathways along Whitney Commons. There’s some fascinating history in that part of the city that she’s working on new ways to tell. She’s also working on interpretive signs about the heritage and history along Soldier Ridge Trail and Red Grade Trails, and has laid the groundwork for SCLT to assist with the Hemingway Society Convention, which comes to Sheridan in July.

We’re excited about everything Carrie’s been doing to help preserve and share the special history of Sheridan County. You can help, too!

If you or someone you know has information about the people and places of southeastern Sheridan County or would like to serve as a volunteer tour docent, please contact Carrie by phone 673-4702 or email historicaleducationsclt@gmail.com



Angelita and Jan Allen and Jim Sorenson were among the many volunteers who helped get Hidden Hoot Trail ready this spring and summer. Here they work on building raised tread over a wet area of trail.

Lend a hand, build a community

Towns and cities are founded, but just because they exist doesn't mean they have a community. Communities are built by people who aspire to make their home a little better than it was the day before and lend a hand to make sure it is.

We're fortunate to have so many people in our towns, city, and countryside who lend a hand to build a better community in Sheridan County. This year about 200 people contributed more than 1,500 hours to make their community a little better than it was the day before.

Why?

Take Tina Toth. She and her husband, Mike, didn't know anyone when they moved here. They soon discovered Spring Trail at Red Grade. Avid hikers and birders, they fell in love with it. "It is so unusual to be able to experience so many ecosystems in a two-mile hike," Tina said.

The Toths lend their hands to trail projects. More than helping clear branches, smooth tread, or lugging big benches up Updraft Trail, Tina said they've found their community by helping build it.

"I've met so many people in the community through volunteer work. It's been an honor to give back to the community that's been so welcoming, and in such a special place."

Do you aspire to make your community a little better than it was the day before? If so, we can help you lend a hand. From trails, to events, historic tour docents and hike leaders, there are many opportunities. Have an idea for something new? We're all ears! All you have to do is contact Chris Vrba at 673-4702 or chris@sherdanclt.org.



Jamie Williams and Tina Toth were among several D.A. Davidson & Co. employees who helped assemble benches on Red Grade Trails.



'It seemed like the right thing to do'

With trails and conservation easements, Don Roberts shares beautiful Bighorn views with everyone

For as long as Sheridan's been settled, people have looked west from the Goose Valley and marveled at the beauty of the Bighorns.

That's something Don Roberts knows well. In the mid-50s, his father purchased the famous PK Ranch, a complex of 10,000 acres west of Sheridan that once drew tens of thousands to Soldier Ridge for one of the largest rodeos Wyoming's ever seen.

"I love this area. It's beautiful. It would have been a shame to see houses on the foothills. I don't like houses on hills and viewsheds," he stated.

That's not the first answer you'd expect to hear from someone who's made a living in real estate development. But Roberts isn't your typical real estate developer.

His reasoning was simple. "If the Bighorn foothills get covered with houses, it might as well be Colorado Springs or the outskirts of Los Angeles."

So, Roberts set about ensuring that beauty and those views would be there for years to come. He established a voluntary conservation agreement for the PK Ranch, because, as he put it, "I wanted to protect it for the future."

While that alone was a tremendous gift to anyone who looks west and sees an unbroken view of the mountains, Roberts' vision for the land – and gift to the community – wasn't yet complete.

"I spent so much time in those hills, I recognized that there was a need to be able to get out on foot." For Don, that was easy. He could always head to his ranch. But he knew not everyone had that opportunity. "So much land is private, you can't get access to it."

So, Don and another adjoining ranch owner partnered with Sheridan Community Land Trust to turn a two track running through their ranches into a recreational trail.

"It's so beneficial for Sheridan to have a place to be in touch with the land five minutes from downtown," he stated. "It seemed like the right thing to do."

That two track became Soldier Ridge Trail, an uncommon trail where hikers, bikers, runners, walkers, and equestrians share the trail with wildlife, wildflowers and a herd of cattle.

That decision to share his land – and those gorgeous views – with the public didn't come easy. "It was a tough decision," he reflected and explained, "because for the first half of life all you do is put up 'No



Trespassing' signs to protect your equipment and cattle.

"It was a major shift, but," Roberts reasoned, "the Soldier Ridge Trail has worked so well in coordination with our agriculture, I thought we should expand that."

So, Don decided to partner with Sheridan Community Land Trust to create two new single-track trails on his Sheridan Heights Ranch.

The first, Hidden Hoot Trail, opened in July. It's quickly become a favorite for bikers and runners. A second, Kicking Horse Trail, will be built next year. Equestrians will be able to join their fellow two-footed and two-wheeled recreators and have an opportunity to connect to Soldier Ridge and create a full-fledged trail system that makes going from your front door to the outdoors easier than ever before.

"The trail system is working. These trails have a great value for our community," Don concluded.

Those trails, too, are actively ranched, so users are likely to encounter cattle or some good ol' "Montucky

shoeshine." As we like to say, it's an example of ranching and recreation working hand in glove.

Don, however, put it another way.

"People get the real Western experience."



Don Roberts stands beside "The Uprights" on Hidden Hoot Trail, the popular new trail he worked with SCLT to develop on his Sheridan Heights Ranch.

What's that?

"Well," Roberts laughed and with a wry smile said, "there's manicured pathways in town to walk if you don't want to get your feet dirty." You get the impression that if he had been wearing a Stetson as he spoke, he would've tilted the brim and ridden off into the sunset after finishing with a perfect quote.

But Don didn't. He was in the SCLT office. Instead, he's content to know that anyone in the community can ride off to the west edge of Soldier Ridge Trail, sit on the bench, and

watch the sunset over the beautiful Bighorns.

And because of Don's vision and generosity, they'll be able to do that for years to come.



Sheridan Community Land Trust works to help a new generation develop a deep, lasting connection with their home so that they choose to experience, enjoy, and care for our home. This year, a new generation learned about herons, songbirds, wildflowers, prairie plants and how they were used by the first people who lived here, working farms, bats, beavers, bugs, clean waters and everything that thrives in them.



★ ★ ★ Working in partnership with ★ ★ ★
CARING PEOPLE
to keep Sheridan County special



1,500+ VOLUNTEER HOURS
HELPED US TO



build 13 fun-filled miles of
SINGLE-TRACK TRAIL



conserve 3,000 acres of
OPEN SPACES & WORKING RANCHES



preserve the history of 2
ICONIC BUILDINGS



hold 16 invasive grass*
EDUCATION EVENTS



establish 14
RIVER ACCESS SITES



get 550+ children & families*
CONNECTED TO NATURE

* Since July 1, 2018



BENEFITING ALL SHERIDANITES

Sheridan County is home to a unique mix of open spaces, healthy rivers and creeks, working ranches, wildlife habitat, and vibrant history. Join us in our work to create new opportunities for more people to experience, enjoy, and care for the places they love.



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 Sheridan Community Land Trust

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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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Make more happen each month

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 Chris at 673-4702 if you have questions.