

Spring 2023

# Sheridan Community

LAND TRUST

Conservation | History | Recreation



*Connecting people to land and history*



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## Helping mule deer in the northern Bighorns

In early spring, SCLT staffers were on a shed hunt in the high foothills just beyond Big Goose Canyon. However antlers weren't this hunt's quarry. The prize? Three GPS collars that had dropped from mule deer does a few days earlier.

Equipped with coordinates of the drop points and an antenna to pick up a radio signal emitted by each collar, SCLT Conservation Program Manager Meghan Kent and SCLT Operations Manager Rocio Gosende-Washburn strapped on snowshoes to trek through snowfields that had lingered longer than usual this precipitously precipitate winter.

After a steep climb to the top of the tallest foothill in sight, the antenna affirmed that the collars could be found by continuing down the hill's back slope. Of course...

Once secured, detailed data the collars collected about where the deer have been can be downloaded. Kent said this information is vital to conserving mule deer in the northern Bighorns. As the initial study winds down, conservation efforts which will ramp up in the coming years as a complimentary

five-year study that will be conducted by Wyoming Game and Fish Department is about to begin.

These particular collars belonged to Does 140, 143 and 145, and were first deployed in December 2021 as part of a pioneering study SCLT partnered with other conservation partners to carry out. These deer spent that time living in the foothills above the confluence of Big Goose Creek and Rapid Creek.

By knowing where the mule deer have been, Kent said wildlife biologists and conservationists like herself "know where to focus our efforts on protecting mule deer habitat."

Knowing precisely where mule deer feed, breed and raise their young, and the places they use as they move between those important lands opens the door to targeted work that can make a big impact for deer while making every dollar count.

Especially, from kind people like you who care about conserving wildlife like mule deer which must navigate growing pressures from people and Mother Nature.





This spring, SCLT assisted with the retrieval of collars (top right) that had been deployed to study the movements of mule deer in the northern Bighorns. Bottom right: Meghan Kent, SCLT Conservation Program Manager, assists Rocio Gosende-Washburn, SCLT Operations Manager, as she uses a special antenna to search for a signal emitted by each collar once it drops from a deer. They can be seen with two of the collars recovered from a location near Big Goose Canyon (bottom left). Top left: A collared mule deer SCLT staff observed while recreating in the forest last summer. It overwintered near Shell Canyon.

Kent envisions helping landowners remove, replace or modify fences where appropriate to make it easier for mule deer to move across their land. In some cases, it may make even more sense for landowners to voluntarily and permanently conserve places where mule deer breed or overwinter.

*"This winter has been extremely stressful on our wildlife, especially mule deer. It is more important than ever that we decrease the additional stress put onto wildlife, and make it easier for them to access habitat." ~*



*Meghan Kent, SCLT Conservation Program Manager*

### What can I do to help mule deer today?

**Volunteer at a friendly fencing event** - Kent said at least three friendly fence projects in Sheridan County and Johnson County are in the works this summer. Sign up for SCLT's Volunteer emails and you'll be the first to know about when and where these important projects will take place.

**Use wildlife friendly fencing methods on your land** - One of the greatest impacts you can make is to make it easier for wildlife to move across your land. SCLT has compiled a free guide that you

can use, and Kent is always eager to answer any questions you may have.

**Spread the word** - "Talk to your friends about friendly fencing!" Kent exclaimed. "Even something as simple as leaving a gate open so wildlife have a way to pass through without crossing a fence. Folks don't have to come to an event to be part of the wildlife friendly fencing movement in Sheridan County."

**Download your friendly fencing guide today!** Use your camera app to scan the QR code or visit [SheridanCLT.org/Land/Friendly-Fencing](https://www.sheridanclt.org/Land/Friendly-Fencing).





# Drought Planner can help ag producers avoid going underwater during Mother Nature's driest days

"In SCLT's drought survey last spring, the majority of producers reported high stress from drought," said SCLT Conservation Program Manager Meghan Kent. "Despite this, none surveyed had a written drought plan."

By creating a drought planner, Kent said SCLT is hopeful some of that stress is alleviated.

Carter Dubberley, a Sheridan College Foundation Homer A. and Mildred S. Scott Foundation Intern, has researched drought plans and consulted with local ranchers to produce "a personalized, interactive worksheet" we call the Sheridan County Drought Planner.

"Our goal is to give ag producers a point of reference during times of drought," he said. "If they ever feel stuck and don't know where to go, that's where this drought planner steps in."

SCLT thanks Zach Koltiska, Matt McMeans, John Buyok, McCade Brown and Alan Dubberley for



their help creating the drought planner.

The drought planner and water supply report are two tools SCLT has released to help families make decisions about how to steward their most valuable resource - their land.

**Download your drought planner and water supply report today!** Use your camera app to scan the QR code or visit [SheridanCLT.org/Water](http://SheridanCLT.org/Water).



## A guide for Red Grade Trails that fits into your pocket

Have you ever been exploring our beautiful Bighorns backyard and came across a bird, a bug, a flower or a tree and wondered what it was?

If you nodded your head as you read that, then SCLT has a new way to help you connect with the land and natural history of our home.

We have partnered with Waterford Press to create Sheridan Community Land Trust's Red Grade Trails Guide. It includes many of the wildflowers, trees, shrubs, insects and birds you may encounter while enjoying Red Grade Trails. Best yet, you can take the guide with you anywhere you go in the Bighorns! SCLT thanks Carol and Sam Mavrakis of The Seidler Foundation for making this handy way to learn possible.

A total of 1,000 guides are in production. They should be available in early June - just in time for wildflower season!

**Reserve your fee guide today!**

Use your camera app to scan the QR code or visit [SheridanCLT.org/Explore/Guides](http://SheridanCLT.org/Explore/Guides).







## Making the connection at Red Grade Trails

Nearly a decade ago, the first portion of Red Grade Trails were given the green light. In that time, hundreds of thousands of visitors have made a myriad of memories as they ride down Let 'em Roll, run round Prairie Loop, hike up Updraft, peep plants at Poverty Flat, find flowers on Fahrenheit, look back into time with the rock formations found along Bear Knuckle or simply sit back and take in the views from scenic overlooks on Drifter and The Brink.

Oh, were there a few trail names you weren't yet familiar with? We understand.

Over the past 24 months, Red Grade Trails has more than doubled! In 2022 alone, trailheads with parking areas were completed at Poverty Flat, Bear Gulch East and The Aspens along with a litany of trails connecting these hubs of discovery.

Because of the generous support from friends like you who love connecting people to nature and the outdoors during WyoGives (July 12 this year) and throughout the year, new opportunities to get into the mountains have been building and building.

This summer, the building will continue apace as we anticipate completing two trails - one for hiking and biking and another for downhill biking only - that will connect The Aspens Trailhead

to the original system accessible from Base and Springs Trailheads.

That's a landmark connection because for the first time, visitors will be able to go all the way up the mountain (and back down!) without having to travel on Red Grade Road.

The key word, however, is "anticipate" as we've learned that building in the Bighorns can be quite fickle as weather, elevation, billion-year-old rock and Mother Nature can conspire to slow our plans.

But those plans won't be dampened. Be on the lookout for Discover Sessions where you can have a great time learning something new that will deepen your connection to our home and certainly learn some fascinating information.

That means you can plan to have a terrific time exploring and enjoying your beautiful Bighorns backyard this summer - and any other time you choose!

***Need a map? Download the most up-to-date maps for all of SCLT's trails here!*** Use your camera app to scan the QR code or visit [SheridanCLT.org/Recreation/Maps](https://www.SheridanCLT.org/Recreation/Maps).







Soon, you'll be able to easily follow in the footsteps of history as you get outdoors in a healthy, fun way and learn about what has unfolded within easy view as you enjoy *History Along the Soldier Ridge Trail: A Walking Tour*.

## Take a hike into history along the Soldier Ridge Trail

As the first community trail SCLT opened, Soldier Ridge Trail has quite a deep history. However, the past decade-and-a-half is but a blip in the history you can experience along the foothills leading out of Sheridan.

As long as humans have lived in our valley, the corridor from Soldier Creek to the Bighorns and beyond has been a vital travel route. Soon, a new chapter will be written with *History Along the Soldier Ridge Trail: A Walking Tour*.

This new tour will be available in two formats. You'll be able to take the tour using your phone or tablet via the TravelStorysGPS app.

TravelStorysGPS has proven quite successful at helping connect people to land and history with the longstanding Black Diamond Byway Driving Tour and the WY Tour Sheridan tour which features portions of our Big Goose Creek Walking Tour.

You'll be able to learn even more with an in-person guided walking tour, which will go into even more detail than the TravelStorysGPS self-guided tour.

Either way, you'll be able to easily follow in the footsteps of history as you get outdoors in a healthy, fun way and learn about what has unfolded within easy view of the trail!

What will be on the tour? You'll learn stories about how Plains Indian Tribes have hunted and gathered in our region, conflict along the Bozeman Trail, early stagecoach routes, famed horsepackers and even some of the history of the land the trail runs along. *Hint:* Its owners worked with SCLT to permanently conserve the surrounding land while kindly opening access along the trail so people can get outdoors easier than ever before.

Want a preview? We've included a story from the tour on the next page.

SCLT anticipates the tour being available early this summer. Follow along on our social media and eNews for updates on its availability.



# Escape of the Sibley Scouts

Look to the mountains and imagine a fast-moving, three-day game of cat and mouse across steep, rocky terrain and you will begin to imagine the experience of the Sibley Scouts.

The peace achieved by 1868's Fort Laramie Indian Land Treaty was broken as emigrants rushed into Indian territory in hopes to strike it big after gold was discovered in the Black Hills of Dakota.

In 1876, Gen. George Crook and a party of 10 full companies, about 880 soldiers and civilian teamsters and several Apsáalooke (Crow Tribe) and Shoshone Tribe scouts, were dispatched to the area of Goose Creek in what is now known as Sheridan County.

Crook's campaign goals were to round-up free-roaming Lakota Tribes and their Northern Cheyenne and Arapaho allies and move them to their assigned agencies in Dakota Territory and Nebraska.

On July 6, Crook dispatched a scouting party from his camp along the Goose Creeks to locate the Indians' camp along the base of the Bighorn Mountains. The party, known as the "Sibley Scouts," comprised 25 men and was led by 2nd Lt. Fredrick W. Sibley. Crook's chief scout, Frank Grouard, argued against the move. Grouard suggested he and Baptiste "Big Bat" Pourier, a Crow interpreter, could locate the Indian camp without jeopardizing the campaign. Crook disagreed.

Scouting on the second day, Grouard spotted a large Indian encampment. He advised Sibley to escape into the mountains, leaving their badly injured horses as decoys. With no rations and little ammunition, they traveled 50 miles in two days, surviving several skirmishes and a severe hailstorm. White Antelope, a Northern Cheyenne chief and warrior, was killed in a skirmish near Sibley Lake.

The trail on which you stand and many features of the surrounding landscape include the name "Soldier" though some have different historical accounts for how the name came to be. One account attributes the names of Soldier Creek, Soldier Ridge and Soldier Creek Road to the Sibley Scouts traveling down the creek bed. On July 9, the party tediously crossed Big Goose Creek, leaving behind two members who could not swim. The men made their way to Crook's camp in what was one of the narrowest escapes of the 1876 campaign.



Rocky Bear, Oglala chief, standing to the left of Frank Grouard on horseback. Taken in 1891. John C. H. Grabill Collection, Library of Congress, Reproduction number: LC-DIG-ppmsc-02525.

## Smart ways to connect people to land & history

Qualified Charitable Distributions, Donor Advised Funds, stocks, crypto and many more assets offer a smart way to connect more people to land and history in Sheridan County.

SCLT has some new tools to make using these smart tools easy! Many of these gifts can be made with just a couple of clicks. You can even craft the language you need to create your own.

***Want to see how you can make a Smart Gift today?*** Use your camera app to scan the QR code or visit [SheridanCLT.org/Get-Involved/Ways-To-Give](https://SheridanCLT.org/Get-Involved/Ways-To-Give).





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**SheridanCLT.org**



*With your help, 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 recreation opportunities to connect people with the places they love.*

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**SAVE THE DATE**

## July 12: WyoGives 2023

The fourth annual statewide day of giving known as WyoGives is scheduled for Wednesday, July 12. Last year, kind people who care - like you - raised roughly \$3.2 million for nonprofits across Wyoming. That includes more \$55,000 that is being used to keep building Red Grade Trails this summer!

That kindness is inspiring! This year, we are excited to announce two matches meant to inspire even more kindness. ***Sarah Wallick and Aaron Denberg will match the first \$10,000 in gifts made online and offline before July 12.***

***The Hughes Charitable Foundation will match the first \$10,000 in gifts made only on the WyoGives.org webpage on July 12.***

All gifts will be used to connect more people to land and history in Sheridan County! **Make your WyoGives gift today using the QR Code or visit [SheridanCLT.org/WyoGives-2023](https://SheridanCLT.org/WyoGives-2023).**



## September 9: In Bloom

We are excited to announce that Dr. Matthew Kauffman, Director and Co-founder of the Wyoming Migration Initiative will be the keynote speaker for our third annual In Bloom.

Matt's research group investigates the long-distance migrations of deer, elk, pronghorn, and moose. The WMI's mission is to advance the understanding, appreciation, and conservation of these vital animals. He focuses on delivering conservation tools that can be put into practice and communicating the science of migration to the public.

This year's In Bloom is set for Saturday, September 9, and will be held at the Whitney Center for the Arts at Sheridan College. Full details, live and silent auction items and more will be coming soon. For now, mark your calendars so you can join the fun and connect more people to land and history at In Bloom.