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Connecting people to land and history

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Annual Report and Highlights July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023



Tom Balding never knew how much history was on his “cool, old place.” He asked SCLT for help, now his brick home, stone barn and log cabin are on the National Register of Historic Place.

Tom Balding’s ‘cool, old place’ now on National Register of Historic Places

“For 20 years, people would ask me about the history of the house. It was embarrassing to say I think it was built about 1900 and not be able to say anything else,” Tom Balding said of his homestead along Prairie Dog Creek east of Sheridan.

He knew the brick house, stone barn, and log cabin were old. But how old? And who built them? And why? That was all up in the air. He had heard rumors that the Bozeman Trail crossed his land. But who knows if it’s true? As Tom lamented, “I didn’t have the ability or the time to do the research.”

Then, one day while visiting Fort Phil Kearney, he saw a map. “It went right through my property,” he asserted.

“That was the epiphany,” he recalled. “Then my son found remnants of a wagon that had gone into the creek. It wasn’t until I saw pretty good evidence and proof that triggered me to look into it a bit more.”

That spurred Tom to contact Sheridan Community Land Trust to see if they could help him learn more about his

homestead. SCLT history program staff researched the property and learned Tom’s homestead was every bit as historic as he thought it would be.

A home with layers of history

The homesite was, indeed, part of the Bozeman Trail route from 1864-65. Artifacts from a wagon and, fittingly for the man whose name is synonymous worldwide with bits and spurs, an iron horse bit have been found in the creek bed, though rigorous archaeological work would be needed to accurately date those historical treasures.

The property’s location along a reliable water source like Prairie Dog Creek means Plains Indian Tribes likely spent time on the site over their many centuries in Wyoming, though there is no definitive evidence at this time.

That water source, though, likely made it appealing to Stephen George, who filed a homestead claim for the land in 1881. At the time, there were only two homes in Sheridan. He soon built the log cabin that sits on Tom’s homesite today. It was George’s primary home until the

early 1900s when the brick house Tom lives in today was built. Its red bricks were baked in a kiln on site.

Like the limestone of which it is built, the stone barn is literally layered in history. Fossil shells reveal themselves in the barn's stone foundation and walls. It is quite likely from the Madison formation frequently found in our region and dates back as much as 360 million years old. The stones were most likely locally quarried.

The barn itself is architecturally similar to English barns, which is befitting George, who was born in the tiny village of Baughurst, England, about 50 miles west of London. English barns are rare in Sheridan County, and even fewer barns are as well preserved.

George and his wife Ann were married in 1890. They, along with Ann's two daughters from a previous marriage, lived in the cabin for at least a decade before the brick house was completed. They'd make the brick house their final home. Ann passed away in 1921; George passed the following year. He made his living as a cattle rancher after initially coming West with his brother and "two yoke oxen and a cow" in 1859, hoping to strike it rich in the Colorado gold rush. George would expand his holdings in Sheridan County to about 800 acres.

More than a 'cool, old place'

"I was oblivious and never really thought about the historic value of my property," Tom said. "For 20 years, it was a cool, old place to live out in the country."

History isn't the only valuable part of Tom's homestead. It teems with wildlife, is host to many streamside trees and shrubs that are fewer and far between east of Interstate 90. It has been designated an Important Bird Area by the Bighorn Audubon Society after 81 bird species including eagles, owls, hawks, osprey, kingfishers, and many ducks were identified utilizing the site.



"It's like a nature reserve out there," he said describing the bobcats, mink, beaver, fox, mountain lions and bears that he's seen or, in some cases, sees signs of. "The bears go through and clean out the chokecherries. I've never seen one, but they don't cause a problem."

Tom has also built a trail along the creek, a place he loves to ride his Onewheel. He also shares the trail with folks who want to connect to nature, like birders, and to the outdoors, like mountain bikers.

"I never really thought about the historic value of my property...I love where I live. To have it appreciated for what it is and to share it makes me really happy." ~ Tom Balding

This year, all of the historical research culminated in Tom's homesite being listed by the National Park Service in the National Register of Historic Places. Now, people can connect with the history of Tom's home in a more meaningful way. And Tom loves knowing more people can connect to his special patch of paradise.

"Getting listed wouldn't have happened without SCLT. They did an amazing job," he reflected and concluded, "I love where I live. To have it appreciated for what it is and to share it makes me really happy."

The history of Tom's homesite would not be preserved without your help! See how you can be a part of preserving and telling more stories of local history today at SheridanCLT.org/History.





The Iron Riders were a group of Buffalo Soldiers who rode through Sheridan County on an epic experiment conducted by the U.S. Army in 1896-97. Their story is one of many stories of our community's past SCLT is working to preserve. Because of community interest in these stories, SCLT secured an ultra-competitive grant to preserve and tell the Iron Riders' story through a host of mediums. You will be able to engage and explore their story in 2024. Photo: University of Montana Collection.

The Iron Riders: A 'tour of the imagination' & grit

More than 125 years ago, a gritty group of Buffalo Soldiers pedaled their way from Ft. Missoula, Mont., to St. Louis, Mo., on what was dubbed "The Great Bicycle Experiment" - an idea to replace horses with new-fangled, two-wheeled iron steeds.

Across 1,900-miles, they rode along stagecoach lines, across open fields, down footpaths, and over hill after hill. Their arduous journey included two days in Sheridan County.

They earned the name Iron Riders, and **because of growing community interest from history lovers like you, SCLT earned an ultra-competitive African-American Cultural Heritage Action Fund** grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to tell the Iron Riders' story in ways you can only experience here *and* in ways you can experience anywhere.

"Their story appeals to the human sense of adventure and admiration for endurance of extreme hardship," SCLT History Program Manager Kevin Knapp said. "It's a tale that may have faded from our collective memory without local pride."

Kevin said people will be treated to "a unique experience." "More a tour of the imagination than of historic sites. As you drive along the route they

pedaled, you will be transported into a unique chapter in military history and the mindset of the soldiers who lived it."

In addition to a TravelStories audio tour, Kevin intends to tell the story in other ways like educational videos, visual markers, and possibly public art. The tour can be driven, or ridden on a people-powered, two-wheeled iron steed - something he hopes will appeal to our growing group of gravel grinders.

The audio tour is set to pedal off in June 2024. Kevin concluded, "Just like the two days the Iron Riders spent in Sheridan County was just one small piece of an epic journey, all our local history is part of a greater story."

You can be a part of a greater story today. Kevin is looking for folks who want to dive deep into the military history as well as ideas that can help bring the tour to life on the landscape. Email him at Kevin@SheridanCLT.org. Call the office at (307) 673-4702. See other history tours at SheridanCLT.org/History/Tours.



See around the corner and create more of what you love!

What would you do if you could see around corners?

You might have got in on that bookstore named after a rain forest on that new-fangled internet thing. You'd never need to buy a vowel on "Wheel of Fortune." Certainly, you wouldn't have surprised that momma moose as you came around the corner on Drifter at Red Grade Trails this fall.

Our community had the collective vision to create the trail where you could directly connect to nature and surprise that momma moose. Because of that vision, the trails are part of a legacy that kind people like you have helped create.

Thankfully, creating your legacy is easy.

"All I had to do was put in writing the terms of my gift," said a kind friend who joined SCLT's Legacy Circle to ensure what they love about Sheridan County remains for others to love.

That friend implored anyone who's ever considered creating a legacy through a bequest of cash or an appreciated asset to "do it today."

"Giving 1-2% or even 5% of a life insurance payment or a retirement fund will have almost no effect on your heirs, but it will convey to them what you cared about and allow them to be a part of your passion."

"Even if your commitment is small, when lots of small gifts are combined, they can amount to significant support."

They worked with SCLT because "SCLT was working in three areas about which I am passionate and about which I had knowledge and skills I could contribute."

That kind friend chose to remain anonymous, a choice that is available for anyone who helps SCLT. They chose to create their legacy through an endowment. Specifically, it is a restricted pot of money that continues to build while earnings from that investment will soon cover SCLT's everyday expenses like lights, heat, rent, internet, etc., so even more of everyone else's gifts can create more of what they love.



That means more moose moments. And more stories like the Iron Riders can be told today so they're not forgotten tomorrow. Or more family ranches and natural areas can remain in the family and natural forever.

By creating a legacy through an endowment, they had an opportunity to help now and continue to help forever. And giving a gift that keeps on giving is a reward unto itself.

"It meant the world to me. ***There are all kinds of problems I cannot help with, but this was something I could do,***" they relayed.

In fact, organizations like SCLT can have as much as a quarter of their annual funding needs taken care of by legacy gifts like endowments.

But this Legacy Circle donor saw an even simpler reason for people to join them and create a legacy. "Giving to an endowment is a gift that keeps on giving forever – what's not to like about that!" they concluded.

And that's like being able to see around the corner. **You can see around the corner on our Ways to Give page.** Scan the QR code or visit [SheridanCLT.org/ Get-Involved/Ways-To-Give](https://SheridanCLT.org/Get-Involved/Ways-To-Give).





The new Double Eagle Trail (above) offers our community additional access to the Soldier Ridge Trail System through the Kendrick Golf Course. It features convenient access that helps you feel miles away from the hustle and bustle of town. Right: SCLT partnered with K4 Trails on the build and volunteers helped SCLT put the finishing touches on the trail during a series of Fresh Tracks nights this summer and fall.

Double Eagle Trail offers outdoor opportunities that are more than par for the course

A hiking and biking trail may not be the first thing that comes to mind when you think about a golf course, but Double Eagle Trail, the newest community trail built and maintained by Sheridan Community Land Trust, creates a hub for outdoor activity at Kendrick Golf Course that extends well beyond the fairway.

Visitors will find Double Eagle Trail a more than fair way to connect with nature and the outdoors close to home. The trail checks in at about 1.75 miles, though its design offers visitors a lollipop style loop that totals about 2.2 miles out and back. For those looking for a longer run, ride, or hike, Double Eagle Trail connects to the larger Soldier Ridge Trail System via a junction with The Link Trail and Kicking Horse Trail.

According to SCLT Recreation Program Manager Jared Koenig, the design offers opportunities for

visitors to get in a quick morning or afternoon workout or take a longer foray to the far ends of the system.

Speaking of forays...or fore-ays...you can always bring your clubs and swing big during the golf season. You can even stop in the clubhouse for post-trail refueling.

However, just because the course will be closed for the winter doesn't mean Double Eagle Trail will. The trail will be open and accessible year-round.

Another bonus Koenig was quick to point out: "No hoofprints!" "Because the trail is built primarily Kendrick Golf Course land, Double Eagle Trail will be open during calving season," he relayed. That means Double Eagle Trail won't have the seasonal spring calving closure like Hidden Hoot Trail.



Though part of the trail runs along the periphery of a golf course, Koenig said visitors will quickly feel like they're miles away from the hustle and bustle of town.

“The trail flows through vegetation that is only browsed by wildlife, which makes it a bit of a ‘wild island’ among rangeland, homesteads, and the golf course,” he remarked. “At the highest points, you’ll pass through a small ‘sagebrush forest.’ Sagebrush takes a long time to grow, so it is cool to see such large specimens so close to town.”

Also cool: the incredible volunteers who are helping put the finishing touches on the trail, by smoothing tread and building bridges, at Fresh Track Nights this summer and fall.

Though the trail was built this summer, it has been on the proverbial building board for several years. Retired SCLT Trails Coordinator Tami Sorenson envisioned Double Eagle Trail several years ago as she explored potential additions to the community trail network. She quickly landed on a southern connection to the Soldier Ridge Trail System to create new opportunities, add convenient access, and spread



trail visitors across the increasingly popular Soldier Ridge system.

SCLT was able to secure permission to build from the City of Sheridan and the Sheridan Heights Ranch; though it wasn't until this summer that SCLT had the ability to build it. ***Double Eagle Trail was built because to the kindness of trail lovers like you who made gifts to connect people to nature and the outdoors!***

Much of the work was done by Kevin Forrester of K4 Trails, with Jared and SCLT Recreation Intern Foster Ulin aiding Forrester as needed. That work has resulted in a trail with mild grades and twists and turns that aren't too steep for hikers and walkers but still provide an entertaining ride for pedalers.

“We greatly appreciate all of the volunteers’ help. By putting the finishing touches on the trail, they are putting the ‘community’ in ‘community trails!’” ~ SCLT Recreation Manager Jared Koenig

Koenig said the trail is open to explore and enjoy now, though trailhead and wayfinding signage will be added in time for the 2024 spring season.

HOW TO GET THERE: The easiest way to access Double Eagle Trail is to follow Golf Course Road West Loucks Street/Big Goose Road. Please park at the cart barn parking lot and walk along Golf Course Road south to the golf course property gate where the trail entrance is located. You can also walk on the grass between the driving range net and Golf Course Road. Use the QR code to get updated trail maps or visit SheridanCLT.org/Recreation/Maps.



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Stephanie Masters
Chloe Mattilio
Chris McBarnes
Dave McKee
Gwyn McKee
Steve McLean
Darrion Meckle
Jennifer Meineke
Pamela Moore
Caryn Moxey
Nolan Moxey
Angela Mullinax
Fabian Muñoz-Lechuga
Adam Neiminen
Scott Newbold
David Nicolarsen
Jason Nunez
James O'Hara
Ryan O'Hara
Heath Oliver
Wendy Ostlind
Trey Patterson
Brandon Payne
Jeff Pederson
Shannon Pederson
Natalie Perkins
Sally Perrine
Tracy Pinter
Paul Plourde
Jim Powers

Robert Prusak
David Quinones
Pat Rader
Diane Ramey
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Mark Reppucci
Jim Rhodes
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Ira Roadifer
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Linda Schwamb
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Extension Center
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Mae Smith
Brittany Sorenson
Jim Sorenson
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Clark Van Hoosier
Gail Vanderpoel
Tom Vercalli
Peter Veinbergs
Chris Vrba
Sarah Wallick
Carter Wells
Kristin Wilkerson
Bob Wilson
Mary Wilson
Todd Wold
Allan Wynne
Stewart Young

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Daniel Taylor
Anonymous
Holland Duell
Susan Holmes
Susanna & David Meyer
Mark & Tibbie Kinner
Cody & Sarah Jo Sinclair
Margie Taylor

All contributor lists reflect the time period beginning on July 1, 2022 and ending June 30, 2023. Contributions received after that date will be recognized in the 2023-24 Annual Report. If you do not see your name, please contact us. We want to ensure you receive the recognition you've earned. If you are interested in becoming a Legacy Circle member, please contact our office at 307-673-4702 or email Director@SheridanCLT.org.



'A family who watches birds together flocks together.'

The Hieplers have enjoyed coming to family education events that connect them to nature & the outdoors. **That's Casey looking at herons in the rookery during an Unplug in July. It's a meaningful moment made even better because Casey's parents, grandma, aunts and uncles joined the fun!**

"We enjoy SCLT's events because they honor the values and resources our family, as Wyomingites, hold so close to our hearts," his mother Sarah said.

"A family who watches birds together flocks together!" his stepfather Troy concluded.

Tribute Gifts

In Memory of Susan Bauer

Todd & Tracey Bauer
Brad Bauer & Jody Sanborn

In Honor of Bob

Randy & Ginger Stout

In Memory of Beau & Kelsey Chamberlain

"They loved the outdoors, native flowers, and the trails." ~ Jane & Steve Jennings

In Honor of

Gerald & Elizabeth Clark

Edith & Gordon Harper

In Memory of Chris Cull

Joey Sheeley

In Honor of Betty Jean Durkee

Deborah Durkee

In Memory of Jan Flaharty

"In honor of Josh and Scotty, in memory of their father." ~ Charlotte Jenkins

In Memorial of Duncan & Fremont

Pam & Mark Haik

In Memory of Dorothy Helseth

"A wonderful mom!" ~ Patti Helseth-Denzler

In Memory of Jay Huckaby

Todd Wold & Shelley Strong

In Memory of

Jessamine Spear Johnson

Tempe & Harold Javitz

In Memory of Nick Kraft

"Loyal husband, loving father and grandpa, hardworking son of a gun." ~ Lauri Kraft on behalf of Ron Kraft

In Honor of Nancy Lancor

Christina Thompson

In Honor of Augustus McDowell

Judy & Bob McDowell

In Memory of Penny Ritterbusch

William & Kathryn Harris
Thomas McCarron
Deborah & Michael Olson
Peter & Diana Senechal
John & Lee Thomas
The Ritterbusch Family Fund

In Honor of Elliot Rivers

Paula Fauth on behalf of Elliot's Saddle

In Memory of My Siblings

"In memory of all four siblings I've lost - Joyce Soto 2/20/2016, Debbie Wadlow 2/26/2018, Annette Rossborough 7/20/2020, and John Wadlow 2/11/2022." ~ Roseanne (Wadlow) Gentry

In Memory of Leanna Wagner

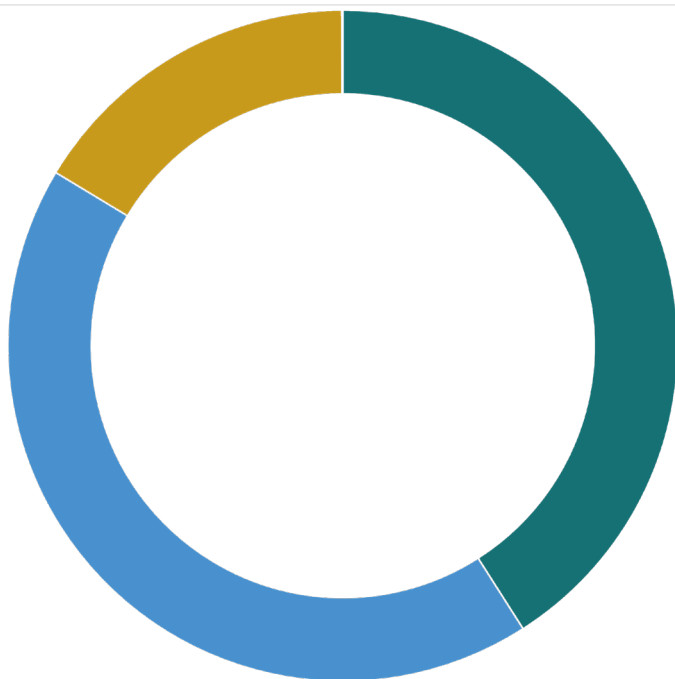
"Leanna, we grew up in these mountains. The Love was instilled in our children & grandchildren, who carry on the tradition." ~ Martha Prescott on behalf of Leanna Wagner

Have a family member or friend who inspired love for Sheridan County? A tribute gift can ensure what they love about Sheridan County continues to inspire other people. Make your tribute at SheridanCLT.org/ Donate or by scanning the QR Code.



Fiscal Year 2023 Financial Data (July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023)

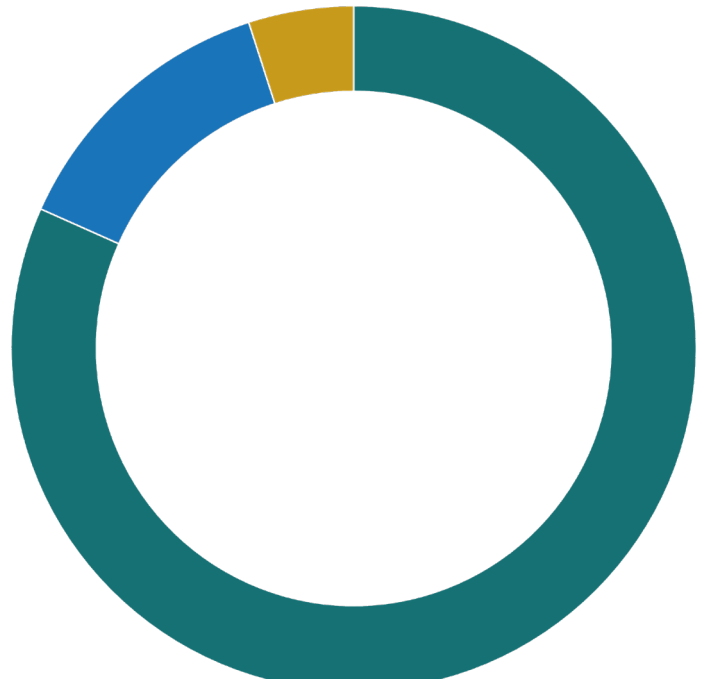
Revenue



Donor Contributions - \$704,446 - 41%
Investment Income - \$733,903 - 43%*
Government Grants - \$280,632 - 16%
Other Income - \$822 - 0.05%

*Primarily restricted for future community projects.

Expenses



Program Services - \$1,012,930 - 82%**
Administration - \$165,830 - 13%
Fundraising - \$61,476 - 5%

**Includes the quitclaim of a Life Estate valued at \$500,000 that creates opportunities for future conservation.



Volunteers with First Interstate Bank helped install Zeedyks near Hidden Hoot Trail this fall. These structures can heal land by stopping headcut erosion and gullies. You can see before and after pics on the next page.

Stopping erosion & healing land by ‘letting water do the work’

Good soil takes hundreds of thousands of years to build. And in a matter of minutes, it can all be washed away. This is especially true in Sheridan County where much of our soil easily erodes.

Thankfully, there’s a solution and SCLT can work with you to stop water-driven erosion and heal your land. Zeedyk is the not-so-common term that commonly refers to several types of simple stone structures used to stop the progress of headcut erosion and gullies in pastures and range land.

“The goal is to preserve what you have and restore what was lost,” remarked SCLT Conservation Intern Rebecca Ash who has spent her term working with local families to scout sites that can benefit from Zeedyks.

She said Zeedyks work by slowing the flow of water across wet meadows and valleys. This allows more water to soak into the soil where it is available to plants for a longer period of time.

“The result is an increase in vegetation and improved wildlife habitat,” she asserted. “This helps the land become more drought resistant. With water already being scarce in the West, these areas are highly valued by livestock and wildlife.”

Zeedyks are relatively new to the Cowboy and Cowgirl State; however, they have a proven track record of success elsewhere in the Mountain West. Land managers in Colorado’s Gunnison Basin have built more than 1,000 such structures in the past 20 years. They’ve reported headcuts healing, more water in the streams, and more shrubs and grasses growing in the meadows! That’s particularly good news for birds like sage grouse.

“With a few stone structures, we’re improving survival odds for all kinds of wildlife,” said Conservation Director Meghan Kent. “More than 80% of our wildlife depend on wet meadows at some point in their lives.



For sage grouse in particular, these wet meadows are vital for newly-hatched chicks.”

to build back up over time as we let the water do the work,” she mused.

This fall, Rebecca oversaw a team of volunteers from First Interstate Bank who helped build three structures on the Sheridan Heights Ranch in an area with greatly growing gullies next to Hidden Hoot Trail. With its high visibility, it was a perfect place to showcase the power of these low-tech, high-reward solutions.

Though Rebecca’s term will close soon, her work will continue. This spring, SCLT will oversee the installation of additional Zeedyks with another family who are eager to stop erosion and heal their range land.

After Rebecca surveyed the site and staged material, volunteers were able to build the Zeedyks in a short afternoon. All it took were a few picks, shovels, a wheelbarrow, and some creative stacking of stones.

“We’re just scratching the surface of Zeedyks’ potential in Sheridan County. Anywhere there’s a headcut, that’s a pasture being lost and that’s a place Zeedyks can fix!” ~ SCLT Conservation Director Meghan Kent

SCLT will offer free surveying and design to interested landowners thanks to kind friends who care about keeping lands productive for livestock and wildlife in Sheridan County. SCLT is also pursuing grant funding to help cover the costs of Zeedyk installation

so there will be little to no cost for landowners to improve their land.

Rebecca anticipates the erosion will stop and vegetation will begin to grow back as the Zeedyks catch soil that is carried by the water moving downhill. Once caught, that soil will build back with vegetation not far behind. Good news: the Zeedyks were already catching soil after heavy rains rolled through shortly after being built.

It is more important than ever to help heal land.

Learn how you can help with our Zeedyk guide on our “Water & Drought” page. You can contact Meghan to arrange a free survey and design, too! Scan the QR code or visit SheridanCLT.org/Water/.



“I predict we will begin to see degraded areas begin



It was a great year for hay in the Tongue River Valley. The fields surrounding the homestead of Kris Korfanta and Bill Bensel were filled with bales after the first cutting. Kris and Bill chose to conserve their homestead with Sheridan Community Land Trust as a way to ensure their homestead remains in open space and agriculture production for generations to come.

Conserving a sense of place in the Tongue Valley

For many, the Tongue River Valley is a special place next to the Bighorns. The River Road Ranch homestead of Kris Korfanta and Bill Bensel has been a place to grow a family, raise hay, grains, vegetables, and graze livestock for many years.

A lot of sweat equity has been invested to improve their irrigated and dryland acreage, establish windbreaks and wildlife habitat, as well as an energy efficient rammed earth home powered by solar electric and solar hot water heating. Bill and Kris knew they wanted to ensure that the land that has given so much to their family for so many years would continue to be productive ground for future generations.

“We call this home for many reasons,” they relayed, saying the views of the Bighorns, the diversity of all kinds of wildlife, and the productivity of the land combine to make this patch of paradise between Wolf Creek and the Tongue River a compelling place to call home. “It conveys a sense of place, a connection,” they continued, adding, “Our irrigated hay and even dryland production is really impressive this year.”

By partnering with SCLT, Kris and Bill were able to create an agreement that puts agricultural use and open space at the center of everything that happens on their land. It also prevents the property from being subdivided for development down the road.

“We’re a part of wider efforts in our county to maintain traditional land use and the values that go with it.”

~ Bill & Kris on why they conserved their homestead ~

“The land has been good to us and maintaining open space benefits the wider community, too.”

Bill and Kris’ homestead could not have been conserved without your help! You can join the wider effort to maintain traditional land use in Sheridan County with families who share your values! **Join the movement and conserve what you love** by scanning the QR code or visiting [SheridanCLT.org/Land/Conservation](https://www.SheridanCLT.org/Land/Conservation).





It is **MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER TO GET OUTSIDE AND CONNECT** with land, history, and nature. More people than ever were able **TO MAKE MEANINGFUL MOMENTS WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY** at a Discovery Session, Explore History program or Unplug event. We sketched, we rode, we hiked, we looked at birds & bugs, collected fish and tested water. We toured ranches & cabins, & traveled back in time. It was downright batty! We did this **TOGETHER**, because of you! Thank you! **YOU MAKE IT SO PEOPLE CAN DISCOVER, EXPLORE, & UNPLUG WHAT THEY LOVE!**



PO Box 7185
52 South Main Street
Sheridan, Wyoming 82801
307.673.4702

SheridanCLT.org



Because of you, Sheridan Community Land Trust preserves our 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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This summer, *Ally Forsythe* joined her family on a geology hike at Red Grade Trails. The skies opened, soaking everyone on the way out. Before that, ***she was all smiles after seeing a fossil in a rock*** on Cliffhanger Trail. That's Ally sitting on the rock, pointing at her fossiliferous find. Her father Andy says *Ally* ***“still fondly talks of how fun it was to go hiking together.”***

“SCLT helped us connect to people of the area when we didn't know anyone, as well as helping us connect to the community by providing access and opportunities for experiencing the outdoors around Sheridan County,” Ally's father Andy said. ***“The events give context and scope to the land around us.*** Every square foot of this land has been trod by generations before us, each with their own story to tell and each story gives context to lives we're living today. ***I want my children to hear those stories,*** to walk that ground and soak in the history that gives them perspective on why the land matters, still, ***as we make our own stories through our experiences together.”***

“As a family we learn together, make memories, and make connections through what SCLT provides for the community,” Andy concluded.

Your kindness & generosity created this family moment. Thank you. Please help create many more by making a gift to SCLT today.