



Peak Photography

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2021 Annual Report

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# Our Mission



The Alliance works to protect natural resources from the threats of invasive species.

The Alliance began when two fly fishermen observed spotted knapweed taking over the Gallatin Canyon and decided to take action. For the past eighteen years, this organization has tackled the unenviable and difficult task of addressing invasive species in an area of unprecedented growth and development.

Our commitment to conservation is rooted in veneration for the natural world and fueled by our passion for wildflowers, wildlife, and wild spaces. Join us as we inspire an appreciation for the natural world, educate our community, and implement conservation projects to ensure that the places we love are not destroyed by our pursuit to experience them.

## *Board of Directors*

Danielle Jones  
Don McAndrew  
John Councilman  
Katie Coleman  
Larry Holzworth  
Lorri Lagerbloom  
Michael Jones  
Jennifer Mohler

## *Contracted Staff*



*Inspire ~ Educate ~ Conserve*



Native plants and eco-friendly gardening practices provide natural sources of the four elements of habitat:



Food



Water



Space



Cover

## Project Partners

Big Sky Community Organization  
Big Sky Water & Sewer  
Gallatin River Task Force  
Historic Crail Ranch

In 2019, the Alliance built a demonstration garden at Crail Ranch using native plants that are wildlife friendly, water wise, and preserving of the historic landscape.

*Build it and they will come!*



In our 2nd full growing season, a white-crowned sparrow nested and successfully reared her young among the prairie sage in our largest garden.



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# Inspire

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Native plants are the foundation of the terrestrial food web.



Because animals directly or indirectly depend on plants for their food, the diversity of animals in a particular habitat is very closely linked to the diversity of the native plants in that habitat.



In 2021, 32 volunteers put in 105 hours at Crail Gardens.

- Installed an interpretive sign
- Weeded & maintained the garden
- Planted 130 more wildflowers & 3 new species
- Planted 2 native lawn areas with Idaho fescue
- Built/installed a clippings bin, allowing us to store plant materials to ensure beneficial insects are able to complete their life cycle on site

*Thank you volunteers!*

2019 - 2021  
By the #s

78  
Volunteers

375  
Hours

937  
Wildflowers

35  
Native Species

The smoke filled air didn't deter our hardy and dedicated volunteers!



# Educate

90% of native insects have developed specialized relationships with native plants.

(Tallamy, 2019, *Bringing Nature Home*)



© Betsy Bloom



© Marina Wilson



© John Marshall

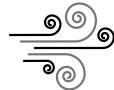
## What Makes Native Plants Remarkable



Native plants are adapted to local conditions, requiring less fertilizer and pesticides.



Native plants require less watering to thrive and can help control stormwater runoff.



Native plants improve air quality by reducing mowed areas and sequestering carbon.



Native plants provide food and shelter for wildlife and support pollinators.



Recreationists are one agent for the spread of invasive species, both by land and by water.



By adhering to clean recreation practices, we can prevent the spread of invasive species to our beloved public lands and waters. Since 2016, the Alliance has promoted nationally adopted campaigns to protect our lands and waters.



**STOP INVASIVE  
SPECIES IN  
YOUR TRACKS.<sup>®</sup>**

[PlayCleanGo.org](http://PlayCleanGo.org)



2015-2021  
By the #s

7 PCG  
Trailhead Signs

555  
PCG Kids Kits  
Distributed

2,621,900  
Media  
Impressions

4,464,000  
Billboard Views

We inspire local youth and adults to become champions of conservation to help ensure that the places we love are not destroyed by our pursuit to experience them.

Big Sky Farmers Market · Camp Big Sky · Jack Creek Preserve Outdoor Skills Camp  
Noxious Weed Bouquet Contest · 4 One Montana's Master Hunter Courses · Ophir School  
2nd Grade Field Trip · Pasture Management Tours & Presentations for Sanders County,  
Montana Weed Control Association and Gallatin Conservation District · 2 Streamside Series  
Walks · 3 Wildflower & Weed Hikes



2008-2021  
By the #'s

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13  
Years

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11,480  
Kids

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1,428  
Adults

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183  
Classes & Events

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Noxious weeds are invasive plant species that are able to establish easily, grow quickly, and spread to the point of disrupting native biological communities or ecosystems.

*"Invasive plants are ecological tumors  
that won't stay in your yard."*  
- Dr. Doug Tallamy

And in this case, the seeds (burs) of houndstongue hitched a ride on this black bear and will spread across public and private lands.



© Jack Bell

## 2021's Top Noxious Weeds

*Canada Thistle*



*Hoary Alyssum*



*Houndstongue*



*Musk Thistle*



*Oxeye Daisy*



# Conserve

Active stewardship by landowners is critical to ensure the health of both private property and public lands in and around Big Sky.

Our cornerstone Landowner Assistance Program provides landowners with the tools and resources to address invasive plants using best management practices and adaptive strategies.

In 2021, the Alliance inspected 83 properties encompassing 358 acres.



2008-2021  
By the #s

887  
Properties  
Inspected

11,533  
Acres Impacted

5  
Moose

1  
Weed Free  
Property

## Spanish Peaks Bighorn Sheep ~ A Species of Conservation Concern.

In 2010, we identified the winter range of the Spanish Peaks bighorn sheep herd as critical wildlife habitat compromised by invasive species.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks lists bighorn sheep as a "species of conservation concern," meaning those species for which population viability is threatened as evidenced by a significant downward trend in population or habitat capacity.

The combination of compromised habitat and a species at risk prompted the Alliance to take action to improve the winter range of our local and beloved herd of bighorn sheep. In the past 10 years we've been climbing that hill to battle noxious weeds and experimenting with native plant restoration.

Looking forward, the Alliance is planning on continued noxious weed management on public lands, evaluating ways to reduce cheatgrass, and working to connect with and educate private landowners located adjacent to the range.

*"Wilderness without wildlife is just scenery."*

-Lois Crisler



Kristoff Druva

2011-2021  
By the #'s

8  
Partners

\$12,426  
Invested

\$155,224  
Matching  
Investments

1  
Irreplaceable  
bighorn herd

# Conserve

## Threat to Wildlife

In the Big Sky area, habitat fragmentation and loss are fundamental threats to wildlife survival. When ecosystems are dramatically impacted by human activities, such as development, wildlife may no longer have the food, water, cover, and places required to raise their young.

The threat of invasive species to wildlife habitat (forage reduction, changes in water quality and availability, and disruption of seasonal migration patterns) is only increasing as Big Sky continues to grow.

## Time to Act

In response, the Alliance initiated our Habitat Owners Association program to manage invasive plants in open space for the benefit of wildlife.

Partnering with homeowner associations and the Gallatin County Weed District, the Alliance aims to enhance wildlife habitat in open space by leading an invasive species management effort for a three-year period. The goal is to assist with education and technical assistance to kick start habitat improvement.



## 2021 Partners

Gallatin Invasive Species Alliance  
Gallatin County Weed District  
Porcupine Landowners

*All land is habitat.  
and all habitat is critical.*

## *Porcupine Park Development*

Porcupine Park is a 460 acre subdivision with 160 acres of total open space.

Preserved in perpetuity, these open spaces are traditional migration paths for the Porcupine Park elk herd and are critical calving sites in the spring.

Landowners see elk, deer, black and grizzly bears, moose, and other wildlife year round throughout the development.

## *2021 Treatment*

On June 15, six landowners joined four Alliance board members and two Weed District staff to treat approximately 51 acres of prime year-round elk habitat. While we knew the area was used by elk for calving, we were still surprised to find one elk calf hiding in the sagebrush. The treatment value of this effort totaled \$4,050. The Alliance will be back assisting Porcupine landowners for the next two years to help conserve this critical elk habitat.

2018-2021 By the #s	60 Landowners	139 Landowner Hours	123 Acres	\$87,184 Value to HOAs
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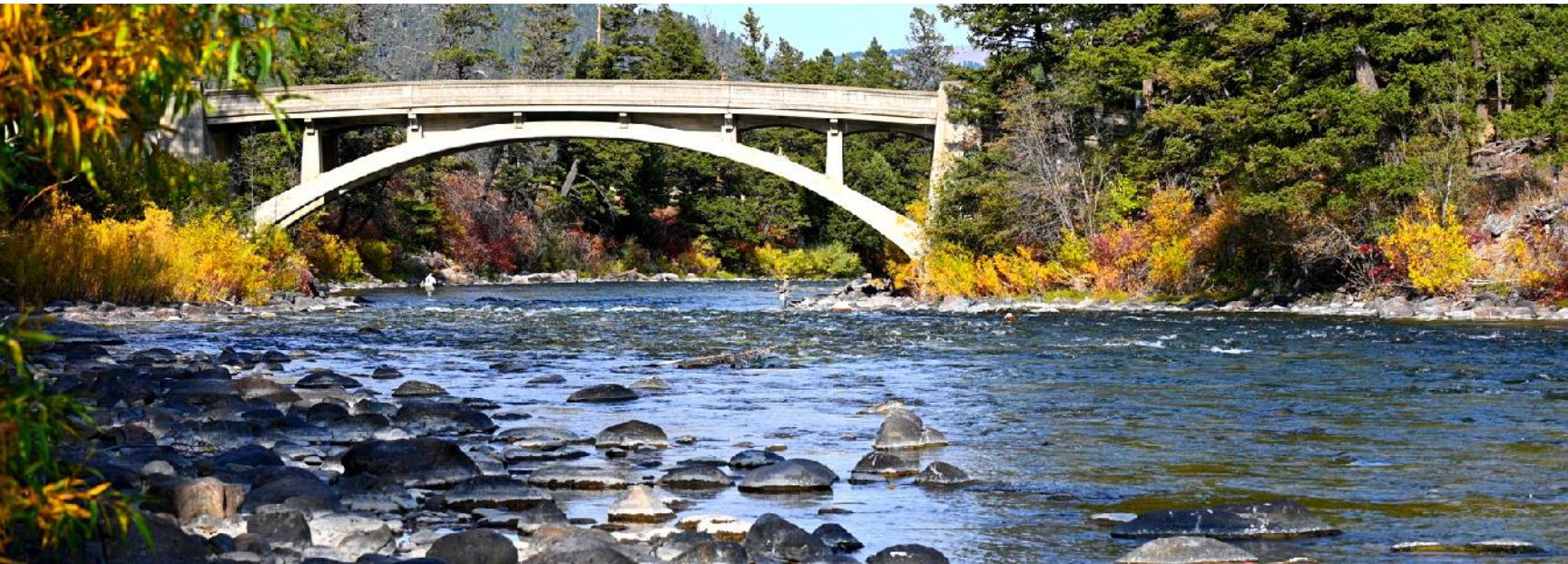


# Conserve

Conserve Our Canyon cooperative project aims to facilitate effective management of noxious weeds in the Gallatin Canyon to protect its natural resources to the benefit of all who enjoy and rely upon them.

*The Upper Gallatin Watershed encompasses some of the most ecologically and economically important resources in our county, which provide vital habitat and water for fish, plants, wildlife, and the people who live and recreate in the area.*

The Alliance secures and provides funding to Custer Gallatin National Forest to hire the Montana Conservation Corps Wildlands Restoration Team, who are trained in noxious weed management. We identify areas of concern and work closely with our partners to treat heavily used public lands, such as trailheads, fishing access sites, campgrounds, national forest system roads, and river restoration sites.



2019-2021 By the #s	3 Years	1,177 Acres	\$12,000 Contributed Funds	\$55,152 Matching Funds
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# 2021 Conserve Our Canyon Efforts

## Week 1 (July 6-9)

Locations: 8

Acres Covered: 184

Treated Acres: 42

Bighorn winter range, Upper Deer Creek, Portal Creek flats, Moose Creek flat, campground & trailhead, Deer Creek powerline, and Karst trailhead & ROW west of bridge.

## Week 2 (July 26-29)

Locations: 13

Acres Covered: 243

Treated Acres: 73

Rat Lake trailhead & lower campground, Rat Lake upper trailhead, Storm Castle campground, Shenango, Elkhorn trailhead, Porcupine flats & trailhead, Kirk Hill, Indian Ridge trailhead, Lava Lake trailhead, Storm Castle boat launch, Buck Ridge trailhead, and Twin Cabin trailhead.



### Signs of Progress

Wild Hyacinth, *Triteleia grandiflora*, is now a common sight at Portal Creek Flats in the Gallatin Canyon. This site was dominated by spotted knapweed and has been a focus of our noxious weed pull for the past ten years. If you visit, you'll find a larger diversity and greater abundance of wildflowers due to the effort.



2010-2021  
By the #s

45  
Weed Pulls

1,300  
Volunteers

2,706  
Volunteer Hours

19,899  
Pounds of  
Noxious Weeds



# Fundraising

## *Bag the Peak Cornhole Tournament*

Thank you Big Sky for turning out for our inaugural cornhole tournament fundraiser!

The competition was spirited, the food was delicious (thank you Lindsie Hurlbut of Butter and Salt), and the weather was perfect.

Congratulations to Sean & Dave for your undefeated run and becoming the 2021 Bag the Peak Champions! We'll see you next year...so start designing your team jerseys!

2021  
Inaugural Year

15  
Sponsors

16  
Teams

32  
Competitors

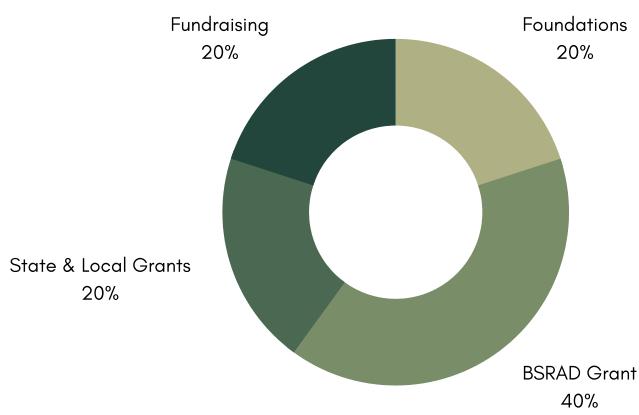
51  
Well Fed People



## Revenue by Source

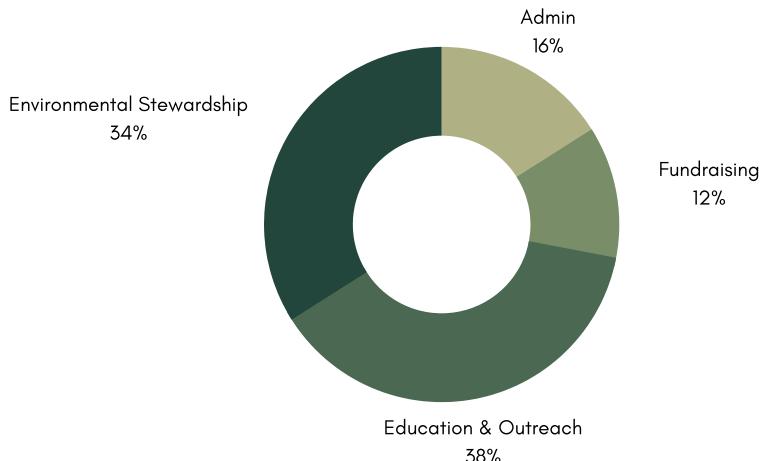
Total Revenue \$123,033\*

\*Includes \$20,100 for multiple future projects



## Expenses by Program

Total Expenses \$111,787



Not included in the revenue or expenses are:

\$76,500 of In-Kind Donations

\$16 average project match to every \$1 of resort tax grant funding

Thank you

to the 124 volunteers who put in 287 hours  
to protect & restore our natural resources!



Fall at Crail Gardens is void of bright color, but rich in earthy hues and sculptural forms. The gardens are a tranquil space to celebrate the beauty and resilience of the botanical world.

## *Thank you to our funders and donors!*

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Abi King · American Bank · Amy Whitaker · Amy Wisniewski · Anna Crider · Anne Fetzer · Anne Marie Mistretta · Anonymous · Beehive Basin Brewery · Big Sky Build · Big Sky Landscaping · Big Sky Resort Tax · Bobbi Gilbert · Bridger Brewing · Bridger Scientific · Cathy Gunther · Christine McMillan · Coffee Pot Bakery Café · Cross Charitable Foundation · Custer Gallatin National Forest · Cyndee & Stan Button · Debbie Lewis · Dan Lukas · Danielle Jones · Darcy Minter · Dave Harder · Efferson Outfitters · Elizabeth Lewis · Elizabeth Poutre · Elizabeth Quist · Emily Azevedo-Casey · Emmanual Reinbold · First Security Bank · Fred Overby · Gallatin Conservation District · Gallatin County · Gallatin County Weed District · Gallatin National Forest Resource Advisory Committee · Gallatin River Task Force · Gerald and LaVonne Nielsen · Gloria Burgos · Great Bear Native Plants · Geyser Whitewater · Hammond Property Management · Hayden Lewis · Highline Partners · Hollis Shaw · Hungry Moose Market & Deli · Janet and Jonathan Kempff · JeNelle Johnson · Jenna Egeldorf · Jessica Dehn · John Ansley · John Councilman · Justin Mohler · Katie Colman · Kayte Kaminski · Kokoro Flowers · Krisy Hammond · Larry Holzworth · Laura Goodman · Laura Seyfang · Linda Meade · Lisa Knorr · Lone Peak Lookout · Lucky Dog Ranch · Madison County · Madison County Weed District · Madison Gallatin Trout Unlimited · Margaret Leeper · Marjorie Jordan · Marjorie Knaub · Michael Jones · Michelle Kristula-Green · Mike Palmer · Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation · Moonlight Community Foundation · Outlaw Partners · Pat Collins · Peak Photography · Phillip Dillavou · Porcupine HOA · Rhonda and Stephen Karl · Roberta Shelby · Rocks Tasting Room · Sandra Young · Sean & Lorri Lagerbloom · Scott Orazem · Sian Hunter · Simms · Singing Sky Photography · Sly Dog Productions · Sotheby's Realtor Lisa Knorr · Spanish Peaks Community Foundation · Stone Pony Pottery · Stuart Goldberg · Suzanne Edwards · TK Services · Yellowstone Club Community Foundation





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