

# PCEC 2021 Annual Report and Summer 2022 Newsletter



Photo: Tom Murphy



# A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I sat down to write this letter in May, reflecting on what we accomplished as a community in 2021, along with the work we face ahead. And then, just as we were going to print, our lives were upended by the record-breaking flood on the Yellowstone River.

We are still debriefing, learning, and talking about how our community was impacted and what's next. We now face new challenges and opportunities. Like me, I think many people are feeling worried about the future of this place. I wanted to take a minute to acknowledge the challenges we have faced and then find hope in a vision for our future.

A lot of things have changed over the last few years. It was not even a year after we passed the Yellowstone Gateway Protection Act (March 2019) that the pandemic hit our community. Workers and our small business owners have boomeranged back and forth between too many tourists and too many cancellations. We've watched more and more people escape crowds and the virus by coming to places like Park County. Now our heroes and the folks that have carried us through the storm – our teachers, health care providers and caregivers can barely afford to live here.

We are facing skyrocketing home prices, a shortage of houses for rent and a rapidly changing community. The old divides found fertile ground over elections, masks, zoning and more. It seems like people are feeling more and more isolated – business owners are struggling to keep their doors open, young families can't afford to live here, and the future appears uncertain.

So, that's the bad news. Now let's talk about how we move forward.

Recovery can be an opportunity to grow, to reimagine, and to work toward something better.

I am proud to say that there were so many times over the past several years where PCEC members demonstrated what it means to be a strong and resilient community group and network, building social capital by showing up for one another.

In 2020, PCEC members built an extensive network to sew masks during the pandemic. In 2021, a group of volunteers spearheaded Livingston Loves Trees and planted 60 trees to diversify our urban forest. And then this summer as the flood waters of the Yellowstone River rose, volunteers jumped to help their friends and neighbors. We signed up more than 120 new volunteers.

At PCEC, we believe that a healthy and resilient community forms the necessary foundation to steward the lands, water, wildlife, and people in Park County. People and animals need safe and secure homes. We need to take care of one another, so that we can take care of this place. Housing, transportation, community health, and conservation are all inextricably linked.

In 2021, PCEC members attended meetings in record numbers to learn about the issues and how to use their voices for this place. And then you showed up in huge numbers to city and county meetings to help shape how and where we want to grow as a community.

Because of all that engagement, just last year we passed a new growth policy in Livingston, developed a Trails and Active Transportation Plan, Gardiner Neighborhood Plan, and a County-wide Housing Action Plan. All in 2021.



We've completed more work on wildlife coexistence, helped gain a better understanding of recreation pressure on the Yellowstone River, and started working on implementing housing solutions that protect open lands and encourage development in our urban footprint. It's clear people care about our home's future. This is a special community.

Working on community planning is nothing new for PCEC. We were formed 32 years ago to tackle the challenges of growth on the northern border of Yellowstone. Over the years, we have had to contend with a lot of bad development. We've been reacting to bad proposals and spending a lot of time and energy responding to threats.

In that time, PCEC has become much more effective and sophisticated in our approach to conservation work in Park County. We aren't just reacting to bad ideas. We are proactively engaging with our community to set a vision for how and where we want to grow – listening and learning together to reimagine the community we want to become.

Earlier this year, we conducted a poll of Park County residents, the first-ever of its kind for PCEC, to obtain real, unbiased data about what our community cares about, what people are concerned about and how we can work together.

We wanted to listen and learn about what matters most to people in Park County, all people, not just PCEC members.

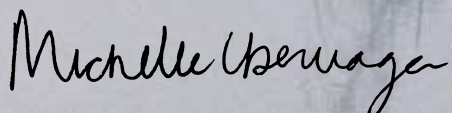
Here is what we learned: 96% of Park County residents are concerned about housing. Four-in-five people worry that their kids won't be able to afford to live in Park County. We also confirmed what we've always known at PCEC and why we have such widespread support for the work that we do: People value clean water, natural beauty, wildlife, knowing your neighbors and the county's rural character.

Fundamentally people agree that we need some guardrails on development. We can't let developers that aren't invested in our community come in and make a quick buck and profit from this beautiful place and the resilient community that works so hard to protect what we love.

As an organization we are deeply committed to creating a place that works for every community member and every species, from grizzly bears to wolverines to stone flies and bumblebees.

We'll listen to our members and our neighbors on what we want this place to become, and how we want it to stay the same.

Thank you for joining us.



## OUR STAFF



**MICHELLE UBERUAGA**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Michelle guides the strategic direction of PCEC and leads in conservation policy, community planning, and climate programs.



**ERICA LIGHTHISER**  
**DEPUTY DIRECTOR**

Erica directs organizational fundraising and leads landscape conservation initiatives.



**MAX HJORTSBERG**  
**CONSERVATION DIRECTOR**

Max lends his technical expertise to all of our conservation initiatives and leads our water and wildlife programs.



**ROBIN ADDICOTT**  
**OPERATIONS DIRECTOR**

Robin directs organizational operations and supports our community and youth leadership programs.



**JOHNATHAN HETTINGER**  
**COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR**

Johnathan contributes his expertise in research and communications to all of PCEC's conservation initiatives, especially community planning and wildlife programs.



**SARAH STANDS**  
**COMMUNITY RESILIENCY DIRECTOR**

Sarah works under the umbrella of community and climate resilience and brings a background in international sustainability to her home town for current and future generations.



**KARRIE KAHLE**  
**BUSINESS & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS DIRECTOR**

Karrie helps develop and maintain PCEC's many relationships with community organizations and local businesses.



**BETHANY ALLEN**  
**PLANT ECOLOGIST & MONITORING PROGRAM MANAGER**

Bethany utilizes her background in field research and outdoor education to help connect community members to their resources and teach the significance of scientific monitoring methods in the face of continuing environmental pressures.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**A**t PCEC, we are consistently working to build the next generation of leaders in Park County. With more than 600 members and more than 3,000 supporters, our community reaches far and wide. We work with members and supporters to do things like recycle at the Farmers Market, respond to the flooding emergency and go to public meetings. An empowered community can speak for itself, take care of its neighbors, and pass on important information to others during those little moments in a small town that occur on the steps of the post office, in the produce section of the grocery store, while getting a cup of coffee. These impacts can't necessarily be measured all the time, but nonetheless they ripple through the community.

Conservation Leadership aims to create opportunities for discussion and dialog. Nurturing that aspect builds trust, even when there is disagreement. That foundation will strengthen the community as a whole, or at least provide the potential to bring people together. All of our most pressing issues need that component: from rapid population growth, to commercial and residential development pressures, to ecological changes occurring because of global warming.

PCEC has been building our Conservation Leadership program over the past couple of years. Here are just some of those ways:

## SUMMER HIGH SCHOOL INTERNS



Please welcome the summer 2022 high school interns: Silas Hjortsberg, Remy Sexton and Scarlett Welch!

We spent the summer mentoring three high school Interns. All three – Annika Coleman, Stella Davis and Severn Sienkiewicz – were members of the Park High Green Initiative. Their work included an Active Transportation independent study, a Safe Routes To School parent survey and Back To School Tips Newsletter. The three interns researched walkable and bikeable communities across the U.S. and Montana and made recommendations and presented their findings to the Livingston Planning Board.

*“Doing small things like showing up to a trash clean up or eating at a local business is not only reducing one’s personal effect on climate change but also inspires others around us to do the same; ultimately the small actions that we take can positively impact the future, and I appreciate PCEC for teaching me this.”*  
- Stella Davis, 2021 PCEC Conservation Intern



## AMERICORPS NCCC

Last summer, we partnered with Farm to School of Park County to bring AmeriCorps NCCC to our community, and provided more than 1,500 hours of community improvement work for more than a dozen partners. This included assistance with the Farmers' Market, Give-a-Hoot, trail maintenance, school gardens, park maintenance, safe house relocation and more! We have another team this year as well!

## INVASIVE AND NOXIOUS WEED MONITORING

We're excited to announce that PCEC has helped develop an invasive and noxious weed control monitoring program in partnership with Park County Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) and MSU Extension. The new project will focus on establishing an invasive species monitoring program throughout Park County, beginning with CWMA's local treatment efforts. It will involve implementing established protocols and data analysis that supports State and National monitoring platforms, as well as newer protocols recently developed by Montana State University.

Weed control and treatment is critical to the productivity of working lands, as well as to wildlife habitat on both private and public lands. While much effort is put into the treatment of noxious and invasive weed species, there currently exists a gap in the on-the-ground monitoring of the efficacy of treatment practices.

We are just in the beginning stages of program development. As we get up and running, there will be more opportunities for community involvement. One of our goals is to develop and fine-tune the monitoring procedure to make it accessible and easy to adopt for area landowners. Once everything is in place we will set up opportunities for folks to gather and learn about the importance of vegetation monitoring and how to implement a monitoring program to fit an existing or new treatment regimen.

Bethany Allen, Plant Ecologist and Monitoring Program Manager, will be running the new program for PCEC. Prior to her joining PCEC, Bethany spent the past 3 years developing the Citizen Science Monitoring Program for the Wilderness Institute with University of Montana, where she helped USFS and BLM managers with their land-use and vegetation monitoring needs, while facilitating volunteers across the state.

# PLANNING

For over 30 years, the Park County Environmental Council has been working with people in our community. In that time, we've always found it important to listen to the people who live here and love this place. That's because, regardless of our backgrounds, most people really care about what the next generation will inherit.

Recently, conversations have shifted to focus on the pace of change and growth in Park County. We've all watched housing prices skyrocket, we're losing open spaces to development, business owners are struggling to find employees, and schools have struggled. It's been a tough few years.

With all these changes happening, we decided it was the right time to take the temperature of the community. With a generous grant from community members, we conducted a scientific poll of local residents to learn how folks are thinking about the pace of change and the things people really care about.



## HERE IS WHAT WE LEARNED:



### WE ALL LOVE PARK COUNTY

First, people overwhelmingly agree that we have a high quality of life here in Park County. People love the natural beauty of our valleys, plentiful opportunities to access public lands and clean rivers, and the small-town neighborliness of our communities. These were the top values people shared. And, personally, I agree. My own kids know and trust their neighbors. They can walk to the river from the house. They have freedom to explore and clean air to breathe — rare things these days.

### WE'RE CONCERNED WITH CHANGES

Even though we love this place, people are growing concerned about new changes. The No. 1 concern is housing affordability. Over 80% of local residents express doubt their kids will be able to afford to live here in the future. There is also shared concern about negative aspects of sprawl in our valleys, the amount of new wealth, and the loss of working ranches and the open land they preserve. People are not yet as worried about a lack of civility, traffic congestion, or a fundamental shift in our small town way of life.



## SO, WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT IT?

### HOUSING ACTION PLAN

More than 96% of people in Park County are concerned about housing, according to a recent poll conducted by PCEC. This nearly unanimous concern underscores everything we do at PCEC. We believe that taking care of people in our community is central to our mission and values. We believe that people need safe and affordable housing in order for our community to thrive. We believe that learning to grow together, creating thoughtful development that consolidates growth in our urban footprints is good for our human and our non-human community members.



### PARK COUNTY HOUSING COALITION

We believe that by working together we can build the vision for the community we want to become, rather than letting growth happen to us. As such, PCEC has been actively engaged in the Park County Housing Coalition, with both Johnathan Hettinger and Karrie Kahle sitting in on the Housing Working Group and working to implement the recently developed Park County Housing Action Plan.

The Park County Housing Action Plan, which was completed in 2021 and early 2022, has a set of 12 wide-ranging tools to address the housing crisis in Park County. The plan defines clear goals and objectives, strategies and policies, financing mechanisms, timeline for achievement, and recommendations for Park County's housing issues.

Led by HRDC and the Housing Working Group, and informed by the public, the draft Housing Action Plan is a community-driven plan generated by years of public input and processes. More than 140 people attended a series of Community Conversations held by PCEC about the plan, helping to inform the final version. The plan is expected to be adopted by both Park County and the City of Livingston this summer. Over the next year, the Park County Housing Coalition will bring together stakeholders in multiple subcommittees to work on implementing the plan.

### GARDINER NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

One of the best ways we've found to help plan for the future is for neighbors to take hold of their own community's future.

In 2021, PCEC assisted Gardiner residents in helping to create a draft Gardiner Neighborhood Plan. The draft land use plan incorporates many of the goals and policies from more than three years of input into the Successful Gardiner final report. The plan, which is not a regulation in any way, talks about a variety of things the community cares about: Gardiner's history; living in balance with nature; protecting our water quality; providing good streets, sidewalks, and trails; ensuring healthy Gardner and Yellowstone rivers; housing and more.



Creation of the draft Gardiner Neighborhood Plan follows the Park County Growth Policy which recommends using "neighborhood and area planning to provide specific policy direction to specific areas that have unique issues." PCEC helped lend Jen Madgic's technical expertise and is working with community members to get the plan adopted as an amendment to the Park County Growth Policy.

### COUNTY ZONING

In 2021, we spent considerable time supporting Park County in its efforts to pass a countywide zoning district that would create a conditional use permitting process for all industrial and commercial developments across the county.

At first called Conflict Mitigation, and later the Agricultural and Residential Preservation District, the idea was to ensure that new developments don't harm the water, air, noise, and quality of life of people across Park County. We have spent years battling bad ideas, from tire pits to gold mines, and were excited that this tool would give locals some level of control over new developments.

Unfortunately, the county commission decided to put the project on hold in summer 2022, but we will continue to advocate for the county commission to take proactive planning steps that the community desperately wants and needs.





## LIVINGSTON GROWTH POLICY

The Livingston City Commission adopted a new growth policy in June 2021. The new plan is comprehensive, directs new growth inside current city limits, and ensures that new growth currently outside city limits is accomplished in a thoughtful manner that doesn't promote sprawl. The new plan also speaks to our housing challenges, supports strengthening our local economy and community character, advocates for protection of our natural resources, and more.

This is a big accomplishment, and we are proud that we were able to help ensure a good public process that incorporated public comments of hundreds of people in Livingston.

## LIVINGSTON LOVES TREES

At PCEC, we love our community trees. Nearly 4,000 trees grace Livingston's boulevards and public spaces. They bring beauty, provide shade in the summertime, habitat for wildlife and shelter from our infamous wind!

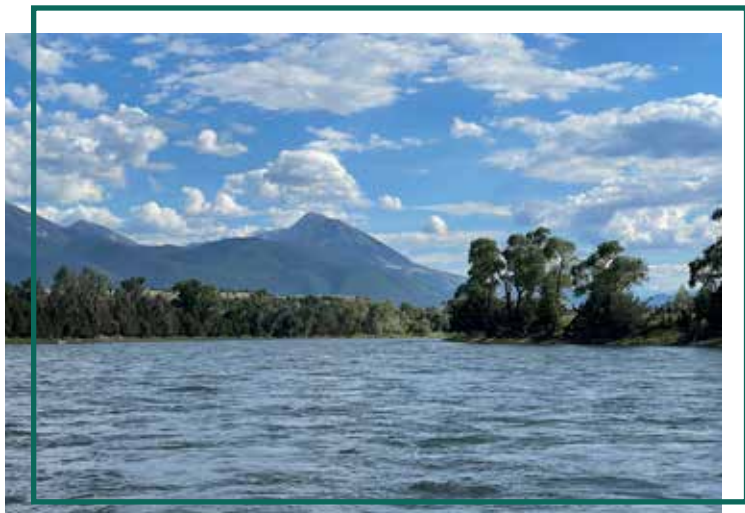
But maintaining a healthy community forest is more challenging than ever, and ash trees -- about half of Livingston's community trees -- are threatened by the emerald ash borer, invasive beetles that have already killed millions of ash trees across the country.

To mitigate the impacts of climate change and invasive insects and improve the resiliency of our community forest, in 2021 PCEC teamed up with an amazing group of volunteers to launch Livingston Loves Trees Fund in 2021, a restricted fund to purchase, plant and care for new trees.

Over the winter, the Tree Team worked with over 60 local residents willing to adopt the new boulevard trees, so the young trees can be watered and cared for once they are in the ground.

Have an empty spot on your boulevard that could use a tree? If you agree to water and care for it, PCEC will provide households in Livingston City Limits one free tree and help planting it. If we have the funding and volunteer capacity, we hope to plant 100 trees a year! Be sure to visit our website and sign up for a tree or contribute to the initiative.





## WATER

The drought conditions we experienced in 2021 were the hottest and driest on record. 2022 does not appear to be deviating from the trend; even with the late spring rain we received, and a record breaking flood in June that ripped through the county, drought is still a concern. The climate models in the Greater Yellowstone Climate Assessment show this trend of increased spring moisture and flooding risk, coupled with hotter summers and drier winters, being more and more common as the effects of climate change increase.

With the heightened regard for drought and an ever growing local population, PCEC continues to work in partnership with the Upper Yellowstone Watershed Group (UYWG) and others to address issues related to those two primary concerns. In 2021, PCEC assisted in year two of the UYWG’s Yellowstone River Recreation Use Study. The 2022 study will be limited in scope as the community focuses on flood recovery.

PCEC has been an active member of the UYWG’s Drought Focus Group, looking at local watershed specific issues as they relate to the larger drought conditions in the west, as well as a stakeholder representative for DNRC’s Montana Drought Management Plan update. We will be focusing more of our efforts to help build resiliency within the community to adapt and respond to the persistent threat of drought, and now epic flooding events too.

## PARADISE PLEDGE

We’re excited to announce that we launched the Paradise Pledge, our new educational campaign to promote responsible recreation. The Paradise Pledge is meant to be a “handshake agreement” acknowledging respectful outdoor practices that for some of us are second nature, but for many new to the area, or just visiting, might not be so obvious.

**Visit [paradisepledge.com](https://paradisepledge.com) to TAKE THE PARADISE PLEDGE TODAY!**

In the first summer, we reached hundreds of people. This is exciting because 2021 was the busiest year in the history of Yellowstone National Park, and we saw many impacts of this across Park County. As we see more and more people visit Park County, we felt it was important to raise awareness about how to interact with the trails, rivers, and landscape all around us. We have heard from many in the community of the need to create more awareness around responsible outdoor recreation, and we felt this was a good way to start getting the word out.

Leave No Trace. Clean. Dry. Drain. Be Bear Aware. Recreate Responsibly. We pulled all of these best practices and resources together to create a pledge that is tailored to our unique community, environment, and recreational opportunities. The Paradise Pledge was created by PCEC staff, with input from stakeholders across Park County, with assistance from the National Parks Conservation Association.

Look for our brochures at tourism organizations, lodging, recreation, and other businesses across the county. If your business or organization would like to be included on the Paradise Pledge website as a supporter, or would like to have brochures available in your storefront, please let us know.



# YELLOWSTONE'S 150TH ANNIVERSARY

This year, Yellowstone National Park celebrates its 150th anniversary. It's quite the occasion for "America's best idea." We welcome this milestone, not only for the enduring idea it symbolizes for conservation and public land, but also for the opportunity to contemplate Yellowstone's deeper human history that stretches back nearly 12,000 years.

We tend to associate the precolonial history of a place, like the park, with the peoples European Americans encountered upon their arrival and settlement. And that's where the story ends for many.

It's much deeper than that. Since the end of Pinedale glaciation around 15,000 years ago, (the last North American ice age) as the glaciers receded from the Yellowstone plateau, humans began to make their way into the area we now know as the park.

Native American oral tradition tells us this, and there is ample evidence in the archeological record to back it up.

The Kiowa place their people's origin story in Yellowstone, describing the transformation of a barren landscape filled with geothermal features into a verdant place we would recognize today for the Kiowa to live. It is no stretch of the imagination to see how this story describes the Yellowstone plateau immediately after the Yellowstone ice sheet receded and the eventual return of plant and animal life.

The Shoshone describe how the trickster Coyote had a hand in creating Yellowstone. The Crow also had stories of the origins of Yellowstone's geysers and fumaroles, and even spoke of the benevolent spirits that lived within the geysers, which is ironic given the one of the great myths that was perpetuated after the founding of the Yellowstone National Park.

There was a story told to park visitors that attempted to explain the absence of Native peoples that went something like this: Native Americans considered the geothermal features in the park to possess "bad medicine", that Indians were afraid of the park, and it was a place best left alone and avoided. It was nothing more than a deceptive marketing ploy to make early visitors feel more at ease in the relative wilds of the newly colonized West, and to explain the absence of the original inhabitants without having to go into detail about broken treaties, land takings and the forced relocation of native tribes to ever shrinking reservations.

And yet this myth was told by the same generation of Americans who saw to it that Yellowstone be set aside, kept free from logging and mining, and remain open to the public. Wonderland it was called. An idyllic place of redemption that was born out of the ruins of the Civil War: a place devoid of people, a wilderness, where we could visit without confronting our social and political conflicts, and tell a story about overcoming our singular narrative that considers the landscape in only monetary terms — a reinvented landscape, where the original occupants were carefully edited out of the story. In many ways, this inherent contradiction underpins much of the West for the last 150 years, and it is something that we continue to grapple with to this day.

There is no reason to do away with the story of Yellowstone, for in it lies the seeds of the North American conservation movement: that there are places worth protecting, setting aside for their own intrinsic merits. Whether we enter those places seeking solace, renewal or simply a break from our every day, they are needed, not only for us, but for the larger ecosystem, and the wildlife, songbirds and smallest of insects that thrive therein. While not without its flaws, there is much more to that story needing to be told.



We herald Yellowstone as our greatest idea in conservation, and there is no denying the right thing was done in establishing the first national park. There are countless books and articles highlighting the geologic and geothermal treasures that make the park what it is today, the features that bring visitors in increasing record numbers from across the globe. But that is only part of the story, one that begins relatively recently. What knowledge are we missing? What stories have we lost? What does Yellowstone reflect in us today, and what did it represent to the first people who lived here many millennia ago?

At the PCEC office, we have a copy of a special newspaper insert published by the Billings Gazette in 1972 celebrating the 100th anniversary of Yellowstone. There are interesting and timely pieces about the closing of the park's garbage dumps to keep bears out, as well as plenty of tips for visitors (all of the ads are a wonderful time capsule of Montana 50 years ago). It's also filled with all the well-known history of the park, but that history begins with John Colter and progresses from there. Notably absent is any mention of Indigenous peoples. This is not meant to criticize the editors, but only to illustrate that our perspectives have changed.

We now recognize that nearly 50 tribes claim ancestral ties to the Yellowstone region. Yellowstone National Park officially recognizes the following 27 tribes with ancestral ties to the park at the time of its founding: the Assiniboine and Sioux, Blackfeet, Cheyenne River Sioux, Coeur d'Alene, Comanche, Colville Reservation, Crow, Crow Creek Sioux, Eastern Shoshone, Flandreau Santee Sioux, Gros Ventre and Assiniboine, Kiowa, Little Shell Chippewa, Lower Brule Sioux, Nez Perce, Northern Arapaho, Northern Cheyenne, Oglala Sioux, Rosebud Sioux, Salish and Kootenai, Shoshone-Bannock, Sisseton Wahpeton, Spirit Lake, Standing Rock Sioux, Turtle Mountain Band of the Chippewa, Umatilla Reservation and Yankton Sioux.

We applaud the National Park Service for their efforts this year to recognize Native culture and history within the park. Throughout the summer, there will be opportunities to learn more about the native history and culture of the park at the Yellowstone Tribal Heritage Center.

The All Nations Teepee Village will be erected and open to the public at Madison Junction August 23rd-25th, where visitors will have a chance to meet and learn from tribal members. Resiliency of the People – a display of illuminated Teepees – will be available to view at the Roosevelt Arch in Gardiner August 23rd-27th also at the Roosevelt Arch on August 24th & 25th at dusk Rematriate will be performed. PCEC is partnering with Greater Yellowstone Coalition, National Parks Conservation Association and others on fundraising for this effort curated by Mountain Time Arts.

Yellowstone is not a fortress. No battlements stand astride its border. It is the heart of a vibrant ecosystem that extends far and wide into three different states.

PCEC is only one of many groups standing among all the people who champion not only the park, also but the lands that surround it. It is an honor to do so, and a responsibility we don't take lightly.

We are only one thread in the tapestry of Yellowstone and would like to thank everyone else who likewise are woven into this place.





## CRAZIES

### *Protecting Wild, Working and Sacred Landscapes: Public land consolidation and resolution to trail access conflicts in the checkerboarded Crazy Mountains.*

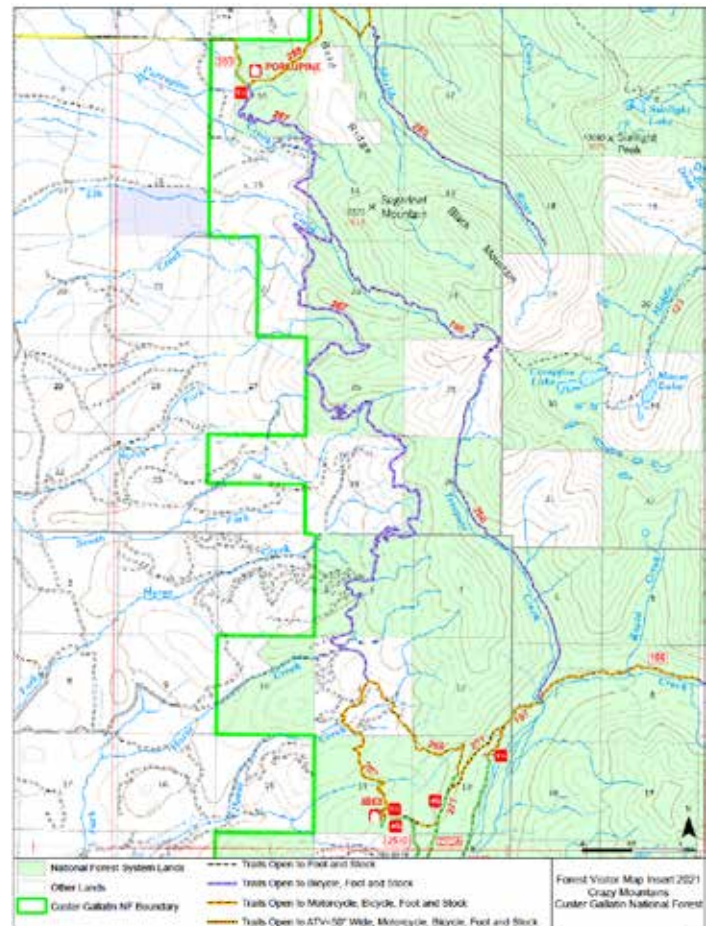
Progress is becoming clear in the Crazies. Last fall, we were able to cut the ribbon on the newly rerouted Porcupine Ibx Trail, and then join the Livingston Bike Club in a traverse of the completed trail.

Also, in 2021, our Crazy Mountain Access Project initiative, which includes many other partners, submitted the East Crazy Mountain and Inspiration Divide land exchange to the Forest Service. This land exchange will consolidate 30 square miles of checkerboard public land on the eastern side of the range.

At the same time, this initiative has resulted in growing relationships between diverse individuals with deep connections to the landscape — which we believe is critical to stewarding this special place.

PCEC will continue to work closely with landowners on the East Crazy Mountains Land Exchange. Our long-term goal is to work with diverse partners to develop a legislative package that includes the East Crazy Mountains Land Exchange, as well as wilderness, backcountry, and cultural land designations for public lands within the Crazy Mountains.

In 2022, we will initiate an oral history project to collect stories of connection to this landscape, under the guidance of Northern Cheyenne historian Francine Spang-Willis.







## WOLVES

This winter, 25 Yellowstone wolves were killed in the surrounding states in wolf hunts.

The vast majority of these wolves – including the entire Phantom Lake pack – were killed right here in Park County, after the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission lifted a longstanding one-wolf quota in hunting districts near Yellowstone, and allowed changes like increased bag limits, night hunting, and baiting.

In Park County, this threat to what we hold dear – an intact ecosystem, coexistence with wildlife, businesses that benefit from a natural ecosystem – became clear.

In response to that, local businesses created Wild Livelihoods, a coalition of more than 150 local business livelihoods that depend on wildlife. Together, the businesses value open spaces, clean air and water and sustainable, biodiverse wildlife populations.

PCEC has joined Wild Livelihoods and is proud to be fighting alongside local businesses for a sustainable wolf population along Yellowstone’s northern border. This includes asking the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission to reinstate quotas of one wolf per wildlife management unit.

In conjunction with Bear Creek Council, the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, NRDC, the National Park Conservation Association and Wild Livelihoods, PCEC recently completed an economic impact study that found that wolves bring \$82 million in out-of-state tourism dollars to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, and that tourism supports more than three-in-five jobs in Park County.

If your business would like to join Wild Livelihoods Business Coalition, you can do so at [wildlivelihoods.com](http://wildlivelihoods.com). The coalition is also working toward solutions around elk, the Yellowstone River, and the Paradise Pledge.

### Yellowstone Wolves Killed By Hunting Season

Last winter, 25 wolves from Yellowstone National Park were killed in the 2021-2022 hunting season. One pack – the Phantom Lake pack – was entirely eliminated. This is by far the most since hunting was first allowed in 2009-2010.



Chart: Park County Environmental Council • Source: Yellowstone National Park • Created with Datawrapper

# YELLOWSTONE SAFE PASSAGES

Montana is a driver's state. We'll often refer to the time it takes to get somewhere, and not the mileage, if only to make the destination sound less distant. Montana also has some of the richest diversity of wildlife in the Lower 48. The combination can be lethal.

We've all seen a glowing pair of eyes coming out of the darkness in our vehicles headlights. While the state has one of the lowest population densities per square mile, we are second in the nation when it comes to the risk of wildlife vehicle collisions; unfortunately, Montana also has the most fatalities per capita resulting from wildlife vehicle collisions.

We refer to Park County as Yellowstone's Northern Gateway: a succinct geographic summary that creates an image of this place with only a few words. In the most literal sense, what that means is that a major highway bisects our county from top to bottom; and that road, U.S. Highway 89, is the singular conduit for the nearly one million people traveling annually through Park County to Yellowstone, as well as the primary road our community uses to get to town, school, work, or just outside.

Combine that with the abundance of wildlife we share this landscape with and it will come as no surprise that 89 creates an issue, not only for wildlife moving across the valley, but for everyone who is traveling the highway. Half of all reported accidents on 89 involve wildlife. Needless to say this never ends well for the wildlife either: the most common animals hit are deer and elk, but antelope, moose, bears, bighorn sheep, birds and countless smaller animals are struck on 89 each year.

The economic impact from wildlife vehicle collisions cannot be ignored either. Auto-body repairs are expensive, your insurance rates can go up, not to mention any medical costs if you're injured. For many, those are impacts that are not easy to incur.

In 2019, Daniel Anderson, with the Common Ground Project, convened a meeting with PCEC, Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Center for Large Landscape Conservation and National Parks Conservation Association to discuss the issue of wildlife vehicle collisions on Highway 89. From that meeting, a partnership was formed to address the issue, which we now call Yellowstone Safe Passages.

Since that time, we have immersed ourselves in learning about road ecology, wildlife movement, highway safety, and accommodations that can help mitigate wildlife vehicle collisions. We've built strong working relationships with the Montana Department of Transportation, Fish Wildlife and Parks, the US Forest Service and our local elected officials. More importantly, we have been building important relationships with local landowners along



Photo: Courtesy of Yellowstone National Park



the highway, and many members of our community. In fact, we have yet to meet someone who doesn't recognize the problem and does not want to explore opportunities to resolve it. It comes as no surprise that almost everyone we've spoken to has either hit an animal on the road, had a near miss, or knows someone who has.

The next step that we're undertaking this year will be a detailed highway assessment, being conducted by the Center for Large Landscape Conservation and the Western Transportation Institute. This study will provide the data we need to focus on the areas in Paradise Valley and the Gardiner Basin that would benefit the most from either a wildlife crossing structure, or some form of mitigation project.

We have also enlisted the help of citizen scientists who travel the highway frequently to use a wildlife tracking phone application to mark the locations for both live and roadkill animals. Additionally, we have set up motion sensing cameras placed at strategic locations to begin collecting data on wildlife movements adjacent to Highway 89.



Yellowstone Safe Passage's goal is to bring the next big wildlife crossing project to the state of Montana. It won't be easy, and it will take time, but we're making headway and are committed to see it through. With support from our community, cooperation from the state and federal agencies, we believe we can make Highway 89 both safer for travel and less of a barrier for wildlife.

If you are interested in learning more about this project, or would like to become a citizen scientist, please visit [www.yellowstonesafepassages.org](http://www.yellowstonesafepassages.org).

## TYPES OF TOOLS

When looking at potential solutions, a suite of mitigation tools have been implemented on highways across the country and a growing body of research proves their efficacy. The purpose of these tools are simply to reduce collisions with wildlife and improve habitat connectivity.

## TYPES OF SOLUTIONS

1. Wildlife overpasses (land bridges)
2. Wildlife underpasses (large culverts)
3. Diversion fencing that guides animals to crossing structures
4. Educational signage and reduced speed limits that alert drivers
5. Animal detection systems
6. Outreach materials that educate drivers on the risks and opportunities in wildlife-vehicle conflicts and mitigation options.

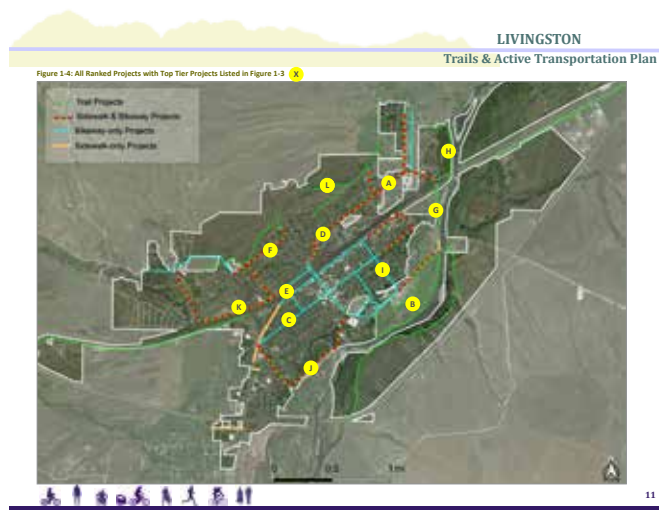
# ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Our work in 2021 on trails and active transportation proved both exciting and rewarding. We continued to advocate for county-wide trails and bike paths and provide a voice for AT in planning and development decisions; specifically in the Growth Policy and new City's Trails and Active Transportation Plan. The ATC hosted a series of webinars with national experts highlighting pedestrian-centered communities and co-hosted fun bicycle rides. We also spent a lot of time on the ground, working alongside community members, young leaders, decision makers and active transportation experts to educate ourselves and invest in planning processes.

## CITY OF LIVINGSTON TRAILS & ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

In 2021, the City of Livingston embarked on its first-ever Trails and Active Transportation Plan, PCEC's Sarah Stands sat on the steering committee for the plan and is the lead organizer for the coalition.

Livingston has always been a walking, biking, and rolling town. The historic grid street pattern is compact and at a human scale. But the design of our neighborhoods and roads has changed in the last 50 years to become more dependent on automobiles. We advocate for people-centric infrastructure and hope to influence where and how we grow so that our community can be safe, connected, vibrant and healthy.



The Plan identifies nearly 32 possible trail, sidewalk, and bikeway City projects, some of the exciting recommendations include:

- A. Gallatin/Bennett, N St to Park (0.6 miles) - Sidewalks and bikeway \$200,000
- B. Yellowstone River Trail, north side, Baseball/Softball Complex to Mayor's Landing (0.9 miles) - Shared use pathway \$90,000 to \$150,000
- K. Front, 5th to Star Road (0.8 miles) - Sidewalks and bikeway \$150,000 - \$200,000
- L. North Hills Trails, East, Green Acres to Summit/Water Tower (1.2 miles) - Hiking/biking trail \$50,000

In Livingston alone, over 25% of the population is either too young or old to drive, meaning 2,000+ folks depend on safe, accessible and convenient sidewalks and pathways to get to all the places they need to go without asking for a ride. During the consultant-led Looking Glass Academy, hosted in Livingston, we learned that town residents are lucky to live in a place where most folks live less than 2 miles from any school, errand or grocery store — the perfect distance for biking, walking, and rolling. But not all areas of town are safe and accessible on foot or bike, so many people choose to drive the short distance. The robust and inspirational plan is a result of people showing up, responding to surveys, attending community bike rides, and engaging in interactive educational opportunities. Thank you to everyone that showed up in support of a walkable and bikeable Livingston.

## BUILDING AN ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION CULTURE

In partnership with other trail advocates we have helped host fun community events, such as the Wishberry Hollow Fairy dress up ride and bicycle give away, and the Annual Christmas Ugly Sweater Brew Pub Ride. We also participated in the Porcupine Ibex key swap hike and bike through trail maintenance day, and attended three summer kids bicycle rodeos, supporting week of the young child, Cayden Leonard bicycle rodeo memorial, and the annual AG Fair bike rodeo and skills obstacle course. The pandemic has shown us that access to trails and active transportation provide people opportunities for physical, spiritual and mental wellbeing. If people are not healthy, they are not resilient. And without resiliency, we cannot look after each other or the environment. As an organization, taking care of people is central to our values and our mission. Because when we are resilient, we can be better stewards of Park County. We hope you will join us and support us in maintaining and building rollable and walkable communities.





## All of us at PCEC are happy to introduce PCEC 365, our new monthly giving program!

For as little as \$10 a month, you can support conservation in Park County all year long! Become part of PCEC 365 and help sustain our mission: to safeguard the land, water, wildlife and people of Yellowstone's Northern Gateway.

Recurring gifts are important to the wellbeing of PCEC. They provide consistent funding throughout the year, which means we can plan ahead, take on more work and make a bigger impact.

It's simple! Here's how you do it: Visit our website and select the dollar amount you'd like to contribute each month, fill out your contact information, and that's it. Each month, your donation will be charged to the card you used to make your first payment. You can cancel at any time by sending an email to [info@pcecmt.org](mailto:info@pcecmt.org).

If you join this giving society, you will be invited to our exclusive member-only 365 events – our annual 365 summer hike and the annual 365 ski. And you will receive a Tom Murphy calendar in December!

If you sign up today, you'll also receive an insulated PCEC hydro flask mug.

To everyone who has already set up recurring donations with us, thank you!  
You will automatically be enrolled in PCEC 365.

# 2021 FINANCIAL REPORT

**\$558,650**

Total Budget

**\$664,971**

Income

**\$555,595**

Expenses

We are deeply grateful for your support in 2021. Thank you for taking an interest in our financials.



**380**

GENEROUS  
DONORS

Dollar for dollar, your support goes a long way with PCEC. We are a flat organization, with low overhead. By far, our biggest expense is our people.

PCEC tracks our hours based on administrative, fundraising and conservation program-related tasks so we know that we are spending our time making an impact. In 2021, 82% of the hours spent by our hardworking staff were committed to programmatic initiatives to protect wild landscapes, advocate for sound community planning, building and engaging community conservation leaders, right here at home in Park County.

2021 was another strong year financially for PCEC. PCEC's 2021 budget was \$558,650. In 2021, income was higher than projected, with an actual income of \$664,971 and expenses of \$555,595. This additional income allowed us to grow our staff, accomplish more programmatically and increase our monthly allocation to the Tom Murphy Operating Reserve Fund.

In 2021, we were able to meet our goal of having 6 months of operating expenses in the Tom Murphy Reserve Fund, ensuring we have a strong and sustainable financial future.

We are proud to report that 49% of our overall funding comes from community philanthropy -- from supporters just like you. PCEC received gifts from 380 generous people, ranging from \$5 donations to major gifts of \$25,000.

Thanks to the generous support from foundations such as Liz Claiborne Foundation, the High Stakes Foundation, the Conservation Alliance, AMB West Philanthropies, Cinnabar Foundation, the Kendeda Fund, and The Maki Foundation, PCEC raised \$295,000 from foundations in 2021, 44% of our total income.



# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



**A**s the Yellowstone River started to rise in early June, the community was caught off guard. There was little warning, and it looked like the river would reach record levels. We had hours to ensure that we could protect what we could.

The first people to start making sandbags down at the Fairgrounds were PCEC staff members. Over the day, hundreds of people joined in, filling sandbags, lining neighbors houses, community buildings and, eventually, reinforcing the levee in Sacajawea Park - an effort that might have saved Livingston from even more drastic flooding.

Flood-related work continued in the days following, with PCEC assisting Park County conduct public outreach about the flood, then helping connect those with flooded homes to resources, as well as matching volunteers to those in need.

Today, we're still dealing with the effects of the flood in our work and will be for months to come. The impacts on the people and businesses of Park County have reinforced the need for our work on land-use planning, water, and housing – and have prompted a look at how we can expand our program work with an even greater focus on community and climate change.

I am proud of the leadership role that PCEC has played with the flood. PCEC was where we needed to be and will continue to be, as we work to advocate for the people, wildlife, land and water of Park County.

Every day, PCEC listens to people and helps ensure that community leaders also listen. We know we couldn't do our work without your support. Your voices and concerns drive what we do.

Thank you for your commitment to building resilience in our community, developing advocates for our environment, and protecting this special place.

~ Wendy Riley, Board President



P.O. Box 164  
Livingston, MT 59047

# YELLOWSTONE GATEWAY · 30K

**Sunday September 18, 2022**

Come run beautiful Paradise Valley and Emigrant Gulch this fall! This race covers 18 miles of trail and gravel roads, starting at Sage Lodge and travelling 3,000 feet up Emigrant Gulch before descending to the finish at Chico Hot Springs, where lunch will be provided for runners.

To register, or to get more information, search for Yellowstone Gateway 30K, scan the code below, or type the URL into your browser. Registration is \$65 per person. As directors and racers, we are committed to sustainability and choose to tread lightly and steward the landscape responsibly.

PRIMARY SPONSORS



YELLOWSTONE  
GATEWAY · 30K

To sign up, scan the code or visit  
[run-signup.com/Race/MT/Livingston/YellowstoneCity30K](https://run-signup.com/Race/MT/Livingston/YellowstoneCity30K)

