



Newsletter

SUMMER 2020

THIRTY YEARS OF COMMUNITY CONSERVATION

A Note from our Executive Director Michelle Uberuaga

Thirty years ago, a small group of local residents came together to form Park County Environmental Council (PCEC), giving the community a stronger voice for wild places in Yellowstone's Northern Gateway.

We continue to honor that legacy in all the work we accomplish together. We value this place for what it is — a nearly intact ecosystem — understanding that the very qualities that draw people here are the same as those we need to protect.

Although PCEC's founders could never have predicted the world in 2020, they did understand that our corner of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem likely would face unprecedented change.

I'm grateful for people like Kelly Wade, George Wuerthner, Tom Murphy, Jeanne-Marie Souvigney, Cary Lund, David Scrimm and more, who decided to create a vision for the future. I'm also grateful to leaders, employees and volunteers who devoted their time and energy to PCEC throughout the years.

They understood that we all have a shared responsibility to the future and to care for wild things.

During this global pandemic and time of civil unrest, we are watching the world around us change. So many people, young and old, are suffering right now, while others are fighting for a more just and equitable future.

My family welcomed our newest member into the world in May. I wonder what kind of world will he inherit? With motherhood comes a renewed sense of responsibility for the future.

I am worried about the future all of our children will inherit. And I know that our choices today matter, now more than ever.

Let's work to make the best choices every day to ensure the next generation inherits something better: a more just and equitable future. A future where clean air and clean water are fundamental rights, where we safeguard our sacred wild places, and where we work together to create a world where all people thrive.

I am committed to our community more than ever, to PCEC and to the important work we do together. I am hopeful that we can build resiliency during this time and be more prepared for whatever challenges our next chapter brings.

I can't imagine a more worthy way to spend my time than working towards the vision set forth thirty years ago, together for this place, this community, and all the wild things.

Thank you for all you do,

Michelle Uberuaga, Executive Director



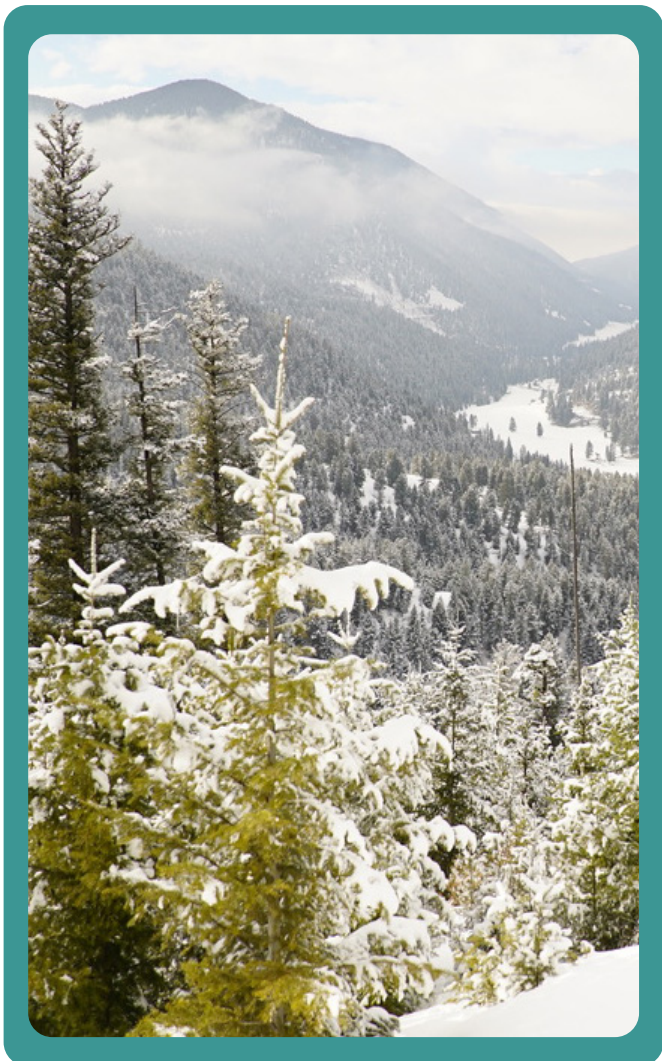
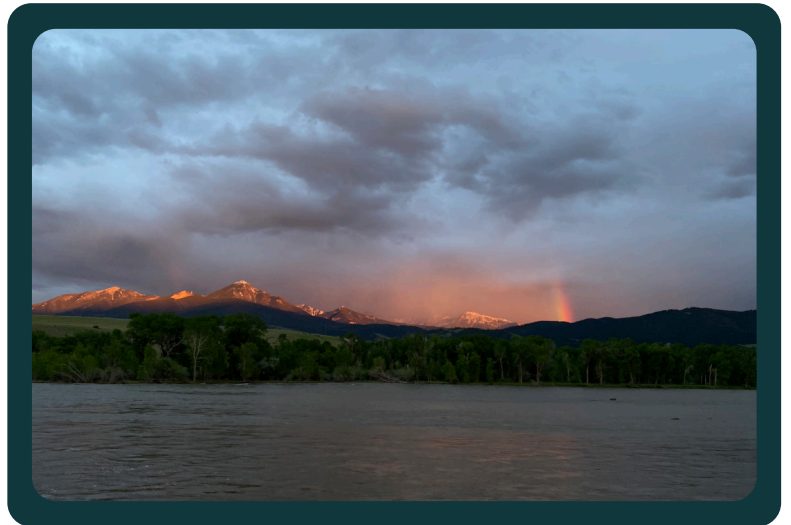
OUR MISSION

Park County Environmental Council works with our community to safeguard the land, water, wildlife, and people of Yellowstone's Northern Gateway through grassroots organizing and community advocacy.

AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With events stemming from the Black Lives Matter movement and issues of inequality, racism, and injustice coming to the surface, we are asking ourselves, where and how does our work intersect with Black lives, Native communities, and their leaders?

PCEC stands in solidarity for any Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and for all those rising up against systemic injustices and racism. Silence is complicity, and we know a statement is not enough. We need to be honest about where we are, as individuals, as a staff, as a board, as an organization, and ensure that we are committed to learning and doing the work.



PCEC’s conservation work takes place on indigenous lands — the traditional homelands of the Apsáalooke, or Crow Tribe. The lands we experience, reside in, and protect are the same lands that were stolen from indigenous people, who hunted, fished, and lived in for thousands of years before our colonial European ancestors laid claim. Many of the “founding fathers” of the environmental movement, and the actions and policies taken to “protect” land were and continue to be exclusionary, often removing indigenous people from “protected” land. We, too, are perpetuating this narrative and noticed that our mission to protect the land, water and wildlife of Yellowstone’s Northern Gateway was missing a critical element, people.

The truth is, we have a lot to learn, and unlearn. But systemic racism, oppression and other injustices impede our ability to achieve our mission. To protect all species, both human and wild, we need to ensure that all have access to clean air, water, and wild nature, to have safe places to live, and be protected from climate change.

This is foundational to our relevance as an organization. PCEC is at the beginning of a long and essential journey to become an organization that champions belonging, inclusivity, and where we bring people together to do big things for communities and our wild backyard.

And that journey begins with an examination of ourselves and our work.

COVID POLICY AND RESULTING CHANGES TO PCEC IN-PERSON EVENTS



In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, we made several adaptations to protect the health of our staff and community. We have very limited office hours, with staff primarily working from home. Please call ahead or email to schedule an appointment to meet with staff.

We also made the difficult decision to cancel PCEC's major in-person events in 2020.

We will not be hosting our Annual Member Rendezvous, Yellowstone City 30K or the L-Town Soup this fall. With the uncertain risk of large gatherings, we felt the health and safety of our members and supporters took priority. We'll miss seeing everyone.

In the meantime, we will host our table at the weekly Livingston Farmers Markets, where this summer we'll be distributing hand-made masks sewn by PCEC's Boomerang Bag sewing team and other community volunteers. We'll also continue our partnership with Western Sustainability Exchange to manage the composting waste station and a new hand washing station. Volunteers are always welcome and needed, if you'd like to help out please, contact us at (406) 222-0723 or visit our website www.pcecm.org/takeaction.

2019 FINANCIAL REPORT



PCEC has grown significantly over the past five years as we address ongoing environmental threats in our community — from gold mines, to oil and gas leasing, to tire pits and more. We have also expanded our proactive work in community planning to help implement the community’s vision set forth in the Park County Growth Policy, to improve and connect trail networks in our communities, and to invest in downtown Livingston. As we grow, we are also investing in our team — expanding our board and hiring dedicated staff to ensure exceptional financial management. We strive to accomplish more, more effectively every year, and that requires a top-notch financial team. We are incredibly grateful for the financial know-how and commitment of PCEC board member Lucinda Reinold and our new Operations Director, Robin Addicott. In light of the economic uncertainty facing the country and our community, Robin and Lucinda felt it important to share a more detailed financial report.



Expenses

We are a flat organization, with low overhead. By far, our biggest expense is our dedicated staff and knowledgeable consultants who enable PCEC to succeed. 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 2019, 79 percent of the hours spent by our hardworking staff was committed to conservation initiatives. Even our Executive Director spent 72 percent of her time in 2019 on campaigns and initiatives such as the mine campaign and community planning. Dollar for dollar, your support goes a long way with PCEC, with 100 percent of your funds staying here in our community.



Income

PCEC received \$379,936.03 in income in 2019. We are exceptionally proud to report that 68 percent of this funding came from community philanthropy — from supporters like you. These monetary donations came from major gifts of \$30,000 to smaller, but no less meaningful, contributions of \$10, from 360 generous people. Foundations were also critical, and contributed 29 percent, with events and other income contributing 3 percent.

In 2020, our budget increased modestly to \$390,000. With COVID-19, we quickly reevaluated, applying for payroll protection and cutting expenses in anticipation of a 20 percent decrease in individual contributions due to the challenging economic climate. Fortunately, foundations and a few exceptionally generous donors have stepped up in a big way, buoying us for the moment, but we still hope to raise \$106,000 to meet our adjusted income targets for 2020.

THE PCEC FAMILY



Back: Michelle Uberuaga, Jared White, Max Hjortsberg, Erica Lighthiser, Karrie Kahle.
Front: Sula Duncan, Angelica Crown, Jen Madgic, Robin Addicott, Johnathan Hettinger.

New staff: We welcomed two new staff members in the last year: Robin Addicott, as our Operations Director and Johnathan Hettinger, as our Communications Director.

We also work regularly and rely on the valuable insight and help from our consultants: Jennifer Madgic, Karrie Kahle, Jared White, and Sarah Stands.

PCEC Board of Directors: Wendy Riley, Co-chair; Lucinda Reinold, Co-chair & Treasurer; Seabring Davis, Secretary; Nelson King, Tom Murphy, Dan Sullivan, Joe Dorn, Kelly Niles and Barbara Ulrich.

MEMBERSHIP APPEAL



Please consider contributing and renewing your membership today. A suggested donation for membership is \$50, but any gift within your means, no matter how large or small, is meaningful. Community involvement and financial contributions demonstrate the support for our work to decision makers. Our voices are stronger together.

PCEC is uniquely positioned to invest in the people, water, and wildlife — right in our backyard. With the support and participation of citizens like you, we can work together to preserve this special place — communities full of character and one of the most intact wild ecosystems on earth.

MAJOR INITIATIVES

Conservation Leadership

PCEC AND BOOMERANG BAGS VOLUNTEERS ANSWER THE CALL FOR LOCAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19

by Robin Addicott



I had the opportunity to join PCEC staff last year to help with much of the behind-the-scenes management of operations for the organization. More than spreadsheets, the work PCEC does with our community, especially with recycling and waste reduction, drew me to the organization.

I took on the Boomerang Bags program due to a personal concern with single-use plastic. I work every day to teach my two daughters to grow and become better stewards for our planet. I had some big shoes to fill, as Colleen Ferris started the program here in Livingston and hit a home run.

This past March, during a team meeting, a recommendation from a board member led PCEC into being involved in the production of more than 3,700 face masks for our community.

At the same time, we learned of the need for PPE from Livingston HealthCare. We got word out to our membership and asked our sewing team of Boomerang Bags volunteers to switch gears and start working on making masks. They enthusiastically joined the effort, and many were one step ahead of us. Collectively, we now have over 130 sewers who delivered 1,200 masks to the hospital in two and a half weeks.

Once we filled the PPE requirements for the hospital, we teamed up with Jeanne DeHart, a professional seamstress who creates customer drapery for her business, The Needle's Point. Jeanne is a living, breathing angel. She answered the call when this community needed it most. Her home has been a pick-up and drop-off point for materials, masks and hundreds of pre-cut kits.

Our group didn't stop with masks: We have made 2,813 hospital gowns, 40 water-resistant gowns, 100 pairs of booties, and 100 scrub hats for healthcare workers in our community.

I am so grateful for the role I have been able to play in this PPE project. Finally, my kids were interested in something other than an electronic device! My husband even made a mask! One afternoon I delivered masks to the doorstep of a woman I didn't know. I dropped the brown paper bag at her apartment door and knocked. She opened the door just wide enough to express her gratitude.

And finally, we here at PCEC want to say thank you to all of our sewing volunteers and to everyone else who stepped up to help this community in its time of need.



If you need a mask, or would like to volunteer to sew masks and other PPE please sign up at www.pcecmt.org/take-action or call (406) 222-0723

MAJOR INITIATIVES

Crazy Mountains

PROTECTING PUBLIC LANDS: A LAND CONSOLIDATION PROPOSAL IN THE CRAZY MOUNTAINS

PCEC's goal is to protect the Crazy Mountains, ensuring they remain wild, primitive, and surrounded by open land and working family ranches for generations. These mountains possess significant spiritual and cultural value for the Crow Nation, provide critical wildlife habitat for endangered species like the Canada lynx and threatened species like the wolverine. Naturally, the range is admired and enjoyed by hunters and recreationists alike.

But the Crazies fell victim to the checkerboard land management patterns of the West. So consolidating land and resolving conflicts over public and private land access is imperative to conservation.



We are excited to announce that in July, the Crazy Mountain Access Project (CMAP), an informal coalition of locals representing ranching, recreation, the Crow Nation, hunting, and conservation interests (which includes PCEC), announced a new land exchange designed to help consolidate public land and improve public access in the Crazy Mountains: The East Crazy Mountains and Inspiration Divide Public Access Improvement Land Exchange.

The exchange in the East Crazy Mountains creates a large contiguous block of public land and helps resolve long-standing issues in a way that will benefit the public and conservation. We believe this exchange is one of the most significant opportunities we've had to help lead to permanent protections for the range.

For more information visit the CMAP website www.crazymountainproject.com, or contact Erica Lighthiser, erica@pcecmt.org.

MAJOR INITIATIVES

Community Character



There is a common thread in all of PCEC’s community planning efforts. We value Park County for its vast natural resources that extend from our doorstep. We all have our favorite places and trade stories of our time spent exploring, finding solace, working, and sharing with others. We want our community to thrive, we want our wild places to remain wild.

We know our community is resilient, but also fragile. In recent years, gold mines, oil and gas leases, a tire dump and gravel pit have all been proposed, each of which would threaten the things we value.

PCEC has proven effective at protecting the headwaters of the Yellowstone River and Yellowstone’s Northern Gateway, but the battle against ill-conceived developments in Park County in recent years has become a constant game of whack-a-mole.

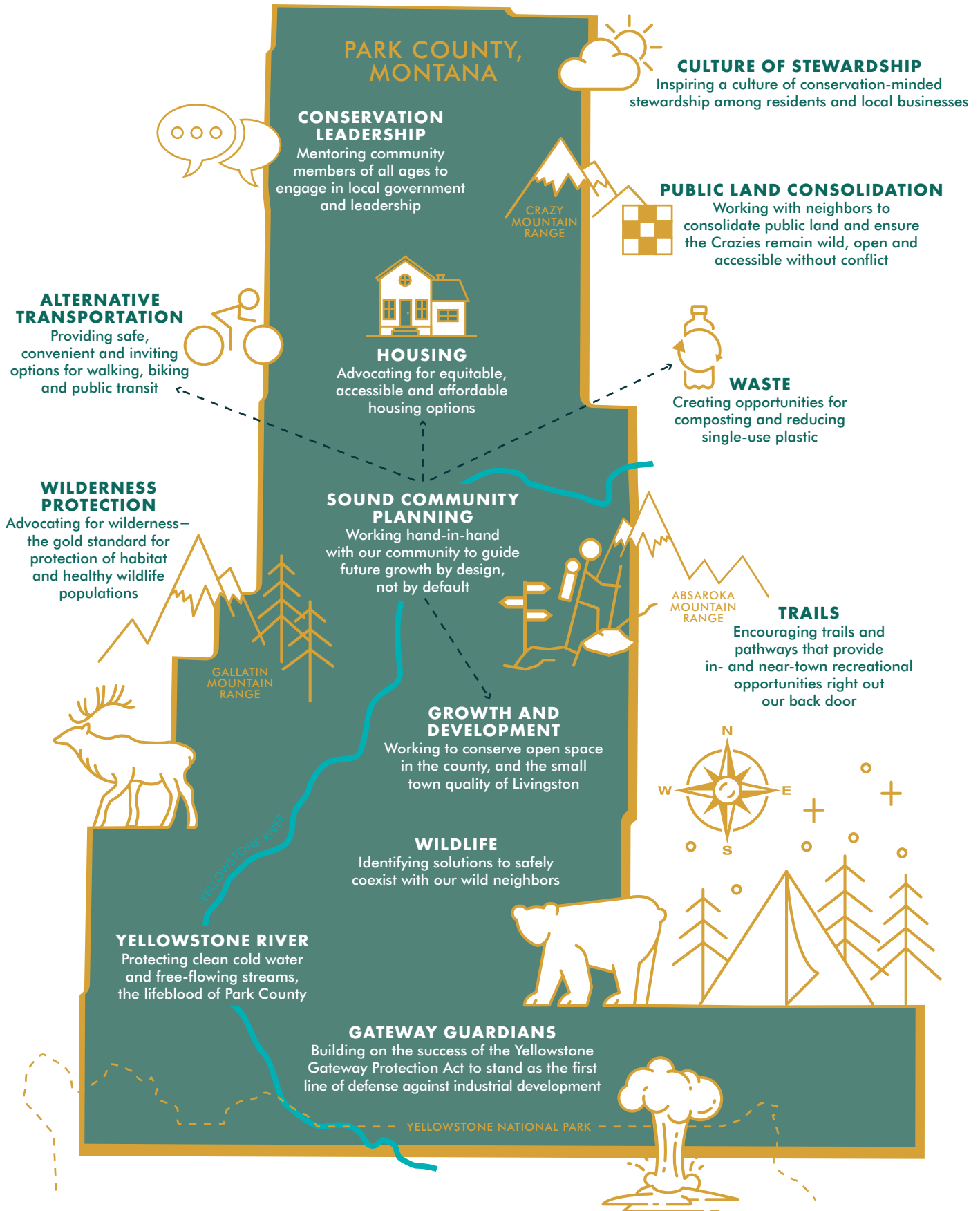
PCEC is committed to taking a more proactive and holistic approach to community planning for both the built and wild environment — and for all the people who call this place home.



OUR VISION

THE NEXT 5 YEARS AND BEYOND

As we celebrate 30 years of advocacy in Park County, we look to the future.



MAJOR INITIATIVES

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT



Community planning affects the health of our entire community. Planning can help lead to good jobs, diverse housing options and safe ways to get around. It can help determine who can afford to live in our community, the quality of housing available, our county's rural character and the impacts of new development on our wildlands.

PCEC is committed to supporting quality community planning. We applaud those who show up, voice their opinions, listen to solutions, collaborate, and help grapple with the hard choices brought on by growth and change.

That's not to say this process is easy — it's anything but easy — but coming together to plan is essential if we want to make sure future development aligns with the things we care about like protecting the Yellowstone River, strengthening Livingston's downtown, and supporting our agricultural heritage and tourist-based economy.

That's where we find ourselves right now with community planning in Park County. The county is diverse, with people of different backgrounds, occupations, passions, and expectations.

Make sure your voice is heard, and be a guiding hand in our future.

Planning for our community's future is an activity that should, quite simply, involve a community. It is a process, a public process, that needs to happen in a straightforward, transparent and purposeful manner.

We have engaged and informed the community on a variety of planning activities over the years, from the Park County Growth Policy in 2017, to the current Livingston Growth Policy update. These are great examples of our community coming together to plan for the future.

Conflict Mitigation Zoning

We value Park County's clean air and clean water, and we want to make sure these natural resources are protected. The Park County Planning Board is currently considering the prospect of implementing a conflict mitigation zoning district that could help lower negative effects of industrial developments.

Downtown Master Plan

We love Livingston's downtown. From art galleries to bookstores, eclectic shops to restaurants, Livingston's downtown is a great place to work, live, shop and dine, and deserves an updated master plan so it can continue to thrive.

Livingston Growth Policy

Livingston is growing, and we want the community, not developers, to decide how and where that happens, so the Livingston we love is still recognizable in 20 years.

MAJOR INITIATIVES

WILDLIFE AND WILD PLACES AND US

One of the primary motives that led to the creation of PCEC was advocacy of wild places and wilderness. What informed us at the beginning has grown to include a landscape-wide vision of coexisting with wildlife, the habitat and open space they need on both public and private lands, and our presence in the midst of it all.

Last Fall, our Conservation Director, Max Hjortsberg, accompanied a group of Sleeping Giant Middle School students on a Cougar Friday field trip up Tom Miner to learn about grizzly bears at the B Bar Ranch. There was fresh snow, and the early winter cold was sharp. The wall tent, and the fire in the stove, were appreciated by all, and it was a great place to learn about bears from Gardiner wildlife photographer Brad Orsted, who has made documenting grizzlies his life's work.

After the slide show and discussion, the group walked around the ranch headquarters looking at grizzly and moose tracks in the fresh snow, but no sightings. There was such joy among the students, out of their classrooms, with boisterous talking and inquisitiveness.

The promise of seeing wildlife diminished, and everyone boarded the bus for the ride home. And there it was, two miles down the road, a young adult grizzly in a field. The bus slid to a stop on the muddy road and binoculars were passed around, and for many of the kids, it was their first time seeing a grizzly bear. For the rest of us, it was a sight that never grows old.

Few places in the lower 48 possess this natural recipe: wilderness, clean water, open working lands and abundant wildlife. This is only one of many examples that illustrate why Park County stands out and why PCEC was founded here 30 years ago. We invest in the wild because we all want to give our grandchildren the chance to experience the sight of a grizzly bear.



Wilderness/Custer Gallatin Forest Planning

The U.S. Forest Service is currently working on a Forest Plan revision for the Custer Gallatin National Forest. This once-in-a-generation update is our best opportunity to advocate for protecting public land as wilderness in the Crazy, Gallatin and Absaroka ranges.

Wildlife

To safeguard the world-class wildlife of the Greater Yellowstone, we need to protect habitat and identify solutions to safely coexist with our wild neighbors.

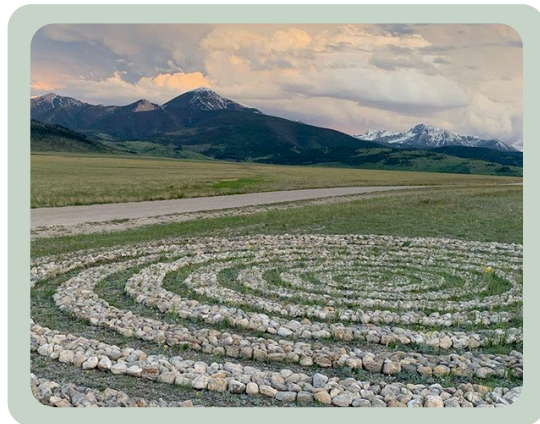
Crazy Mountains

The Crazy Mountains face an uncertain future. Between checkerboard land ownership, disputes over public access and increasing development, the Crazies need an advocate for conservation, and PCEC is proud to serve in that role.

River Use

The Yellowstone River is the lifeblood of the community. PCEC, in conjunction with community partners, is assisting with data collection on recreation use in an effort to guide future decisions on river management.

CO-CHAIRS' CORNER



As we write this, we find ourselves in an unprecedented time. The global pandemic has upended everyone's lives and businesses in one way or another. PCEC is not immune to what so many non-profit organizations are facing — the challenge of how we continue the important work we do to protect the place we love, given the economic uncertainties and potential of reduced funding.

But now, more than ever, is the time to double down. We are seeing increasing threats to federal environmental protections, while at the same time hearing our local community resoundingly say they value clean air and water, the unique wildlife we share this place with, and the beautiful rural character of Park County.

The groundswell of support we feel gives us hope. But as Kris Tompkins, conservationist and former Patagonia CEO, recently said, "Hope is an abdication of action." We agree! At PCEC, not only are we driven by hope and optimism, but also the imperative to get things done.

From pivoting the Boomerang Bag program to sewing thousands of masks for our health and emergency workers, to community and land use planning for Livingston and the County, not to mention helping to drive protections of public lands in the Crazy Mountain range and conserving our Yellowstone River watershed, PCEC will continue to be agile and responsive to the needs of our community.

We thank the founders who had the vision to form PCEC 30 years ago, and we feel privileged to be entrusted to carry on their legacy. We are also extremely grateful to you, our supporters, for helping to enable us to make a difference here in our County.

-Wendy Riley and Lucinda Reinold, PCEC Board Co-Chairs