



2022 Annual Report

Photo by Tom Murphy

As Park County continues to grow, we all have something at stake.

The ecosystem that provides for bison, grizzlies, wolves, Canada lynx, elk, wolverines, trout, beavers, stoneflies and everything else is delicate. A complete ecosystem like this has been destroyed in most of the Lower 48. What we have is fragile, and worth the time and effort it takes to protect it.

It's the wildness of this place and the community that makes our home special — we value local connections and we stand shoulder to shoulder to defend our home and our values. This is a place where people and wildlife can live and thrive, where the river can continue to be wild and free. It is also a place vulnerable to changes brought on by climate change, growth and development, and more.



The critical question we face now is – how do we grow and change in a way that doesn't sacrifice what we love?

At PCEC, we believe that we can grow in a way that protects what we love if we work together to plan for growth. That's what people want. No one wants to live next door to an industrial gravel pit, a five story hotel, or 100 wall tents for "rustic" camping.

For decades, we've encouraged proactive planning that will help preserve those things in the face of the ever-expanding human footprint. With our help and encouragement, the City and County have taken up growth policies, active transportation plans and housing plans that will help guide us as we grow, and hopefully manifest positive change. There is still a long way to go, and we are committed to continuing this important work.

Together, we've come up with a vision: let's protect the rural lands in the County and build inward. Let's protect the intact public lands and wild rivers in our backyard. Let's make sure we have wildlife friendly garbage cans, roads, and fences. Let's build neighborhoods with mixed housing, corner stores, shared open space, trees and sidewalks.

We can roll up our sleeves and help make good things happen here in our community. In 2023, let's plant more trees, show up for our neighbors, champion our teachers and nurses, and support the good work of our local officials and staff at the City and County. Let's make sure that the next generation can afford to live here, and they know bears and bison and a free river.

We know it's possible. We've set a vision for Livingston, Gardiner, and Park County.

Now, with your help, we can make it happen.

For the wild,
Michelle

STAFF



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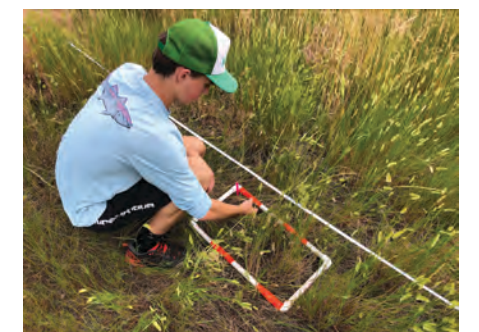
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CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP PROGRAM



PCEC's Conservation Leadership Program continues to grow and evolve. In 2022, for the fourth year running, we hosted three Park High School Interns: Scarlet Welch, Remy Sexton, and Silas Hjorstberg.

Our interns had hands-on learning experience working with staff on PCEC projects.





LIVINGSTON LOVES TREES

In 2022, we teamed up with a group of dedicated volunteers to launch Livingston Loves Trees, a new PCEC initiative to create a more diverse and resilient community forest.

In the inaugural year of the program, the Tree Team and AmeriCorps NCCC members planted 65 trees – hardy maples, oaks, elms, lindens, honey locusts, flowering crabapples and Japanese tree lilacs in boulevards and public spaces all over Livingston. The trees are provided for free to residents that are willing to water and care for the new trees.

The program will be expanded to 100 trees in 2023 through generous support from community members and the city of Livingston.

LIVINGSTON PLANNING UPDATE

For the past few years, Livingston residents have been hard at work updating the city’s foundational planning documents. City commissioners adopted the new Livingston Growth Policy in 2021, the Trails and Active Transportation Plan and Housing Action Plan in 2022, and most recently have directed staff to prioritize implementation of the growth policy.

Next steps include looking at new ways to do subdivision review within city limits, updating the city’s zoning regulations, working on community resilience, and starting the process for creating a new downtown master plan.



PARK COUNTY PLANNING UPDATE

Threats to our rural lifestyle and quality of life in Park County continue to drive PCEC’s desire to support sound, comprehensive planning strategies.

Unfortunately, the Conflict Mitigation Zoning Regulation (or Agriculture and Residential Preservation Zoning District) was shelved by county officials in 2022 for the near term.

We are hopeful that the county will continue to work on mitigating the impacts of growth through neighborhood plans, citizen zoning districts, conservation easements, smart infrastructure decisions, thoughtful subdivision review, and inclusive discussions about how we should plan for our collective futures.



The Custer Gallatin National Forest released a preliminary Environmental Impact Statement on the proposed East Crazy Inspiration Divide Land Exchange in December. The proposal would consolidate public and private lands and resolve access conflicts in the Crazy Mountains.

PCEC supports the concept of consolidated public land with secured public access, but we had concerns about the Forest Service’s proposal. We felt a lot more analysis and public engagement was needed on an issue that would change the landscape forever. We want to ensure any land traded away will not be developed, and we want to secure access into Sweet Grass Creek in the future.

The exchange is a rare opportunity for diverse interest groups to engage and make better decisions for the landscape and communities’ future. We’re hopeful that by working together we can ensure a better outcome for the people, wildlife, and land.

Thanks to everyone that engaged and provided their comments and suggestions as well. With our cumulative voices together, we will make better decisions for the future of this landscape and our communities.



Photo by Tom Murphy

In 2022, PCEC had the opportunity to come together with partners to commemorate Yellowstone's 150th Anniversary. We were honored to help fundraise and support Yellowstone Revealed presented by Mountain Times Arts. This project brought the All Nations Teepee Village to Madison Junction and Resiliency of the People - a display of 7 illuminated teepees to the Roosevelt Arch in Gardiner. These installations brought an Indigenous presence back to Yellowstone for the first time in 150 years allowing visitors to learn from 12 of the nearly 50 tribes that claim ancestral ties to Yellowstone. Our staff will never forget the experiences of learning to set up teepees from tribal elders and immersing ourselves in the All Nations Teepee Village.



PCEC worked with partners to launch the Noxious Weed Monitoring Project, by hiring Bethany Allen to work as the Monitoring Program Manager. This program aims to work with partners to create a standard for weed treatment efficacy monitoring in Park County to promote healthy diverse habitat for our wild and working lands in which this community relies on and celebrates.

Already, our monitoring program has grown a life of its own. If we've learned anything over this past year, it's how important our community partnerships are and how meaningful the work is when we do it together. Our first year came with a lot of successes and we want to build on that. We are now working with 14 different partner groups and 13 private landowners. Twenty-one permanent monitoring sites have been established and 227 acres of weed infested areas along the river were inventoried and mapped post flood. We are going to continue this work while expanding and growing our education outreach and community support.

Education is always the first step, and often many other steps along the way. Getting out on the ground with our local landowners and managers is only one part of that outreach. Creating more opportunities for folks to come together to share knowledge and experiences is a focus of this program. Building on the local knowledge our community holds is how we can make the largest impact.

Effectiveness monitoring is often required when receiving funding assistance for weed control efforts or wildlife habitat rehabilitation. Bethany has been working hard to fulfill these requirements while assisting our partners in continuing treatment funding opportunities around Park County. She has established permanent treatment study sites on both private and public lands for Natural Resource Conservation Services, Forest Service, and Park County Cooperative Weed Management Area.



WEEDS & CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP

Bethany has been getting out in the field with PCEC's high school interns and visiting Ecology Project International students hosting weed pulls and field trainings for our upcoming leaders in conservation. They are being taught about habitat loss due to invading species, the importance of treatment efficacy monitoring, proper vegetation sampling, data collection, as well as weed prevention and pulling techniques.

The conservation leadership aspect of the program is still expanding. This upcoming year, we plan to host an AmeriCorps VISTA to assist in the expansion of the monitoring program. We will also be training AmeriCorps NCCC volunteers to also help with this growing initiative.

BY THE NUMBERS





When people reflect on the year 2022 and water resources, the historic Yellowstone River flood will be the only thing that comes to mind. With our thoughts last year focused on prevailing drought conditions, a rain-on-snow event changed our world overnight.

Work on flood recovery shifted to flood preparedness and coordination. We know the river will flood again, and we plan on being better prepared for the inevitable.

Drought is still a major concern, even after an historic flood and a real winter that brought above normal snowpack. We will continue to work with the Upper Yellowstone Watershed group on a drought management plan.

To that end, in 2022 we began research opportunities and applied for such programs as the AGU Thriving Earth community science fellow, who has begun working on a gap analysis to identify the areas we can strengthen locally with regard to flood response and preparedness. We will also tap our VISTA to help build capacity and resilience from future natural resource disasters in both the city and the county.

COORDINATED FLOOD VOLUNTEER RESPONSE

PCEC is continuing to formalize a coordinated volunteer response for the 2022 flood long-term recovery. We aim to contribute organizational resources and skills where there is a community need. We do this by organizing around the local desire to participate in a community service culture.

Our program goals include:

- Coordinate individuals and volunteer groups by matching their resources, availability and capacity with needs of individuals that were impacted by the flood.
- Coordinate with other volunteer groups responding to the flooding (or future natural disaster) event.
- Assist flood victims with additional support they need to finalize rebuilding and clean up.
- Activate volunteer lists that are compiled from other agencies (e.g. 211 call center)
- Be an on-the-ground liaison between flood victims and individuals and groups that want to lend a hand in flood recovery.
- Ensure needs from the ground are reported centrally. Collect and record data, such as needs and man hours in response to volunteer efforts and updating volunteer response database Crisis Cleanup.
- Participate in long-term recovery and future planning, including developing a streamlined volunteer response for the next natural disaster, such as COAD, MTVOAD and local Flood Stakeholders meetings.
- Participate in other partner and stakeholders meetings, such as economic recovery groups, Upper Yellowstone Watershed Group and others working towards flood recovery.
- Apply for additional recovery resources, such as Americorps, Montana Conservation Corps, and others that can assist in building capacity for volunteer coordination.



In 2022, PCEC was fortunate to begin hosting a Montana Campus Compact (MTCC) Resilience Cohort VISTA, Katherine Fazekas. Katherine has begun working on the framework for a Community Resilience Plan for Park County that will help us remain resilient in the face of the new climate realities our region is facing, like extreme drought and rain on snow flood events. Katherine’s work also rightly places importance on centering vulnerable and low-income populations, as these people and wild creatures are most impacted by adverse climate events. We talked to Katherine about her project.

What is community resilience? What does the planning process entail?

Community resilience is a way for a group of people, in this case people of Park County, to collaboratively develop proactive steps to prepare for the changing climate here in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. That includes both short-term and long-term difficulties like flooding and drought that we have seen and will continue to see.

It is an opportunity for us to look ahead and ask ourselves questions like: How are we going to take care of each other during future shocks and stressors? How can we support our local economies when recreation is changed by less snowpack and warmer rivers? How can we live alongside the water, forest, and wildlife in a warming world? How do we make Park County a happy and healthy place to be for the next generations?

Furthermore, we can incorporate mitigation efforts – ways to decrease the severity of these events before they happen.

Every time I talk to you, you’ve talked to a new community member. Who all have you talked to so far?

I’m trying to get a holistic view of Park County and its vulnerabilities, so I’ve tried to reach as many different perspectives as possible. Community resilience does not just affect the landscape; it affects people. In addition to ecologists, I’ve spoken with local government officials, economists, community organizations like Community Health Partners and the Livingston Food Resource Center, and business owners, too.

When we think about how the climate is going to impact Park County, what are some things we should look out for?

Part of what makes Park County special is the natural systems that exist here, and we need to think about how we live alongside them.

We need to think about where and how we build. We live next to a wild river. We should respect its floodplain. We need to be prepared for more flooding, as it is projected we will see more rain on snow events in the future. We need to think about wildfire risk when we’re building, too. In addition, many people ranch or grow food, and this landscape is likely going to be impacted by more drought.

What have you learned about Park County so far?

From living here myself and from the community members I’ve spoken with, what really stands out is the strong sense of community that exists here. I’ve found it’s been easy to quickly form strong bonds, and it seems people really rely on each other.

Another aspect that people value about Park County is the landscape. Whether for recreation or aesthetic beauty, people love the river and mountains here, and the abundance of wildlife we are lucky enough to see on a regular basis.

Finally, I have learned each community is unique. While people from each community tend to love their respective small communities and landscapes, each community has its own personality whether that is Livingston, Emigrant, Gardiner or Cooke City, to name a few.



Katherine Fazekas is PCEC’s first Barbara Hays Fellow. PCEC worked with John Heidke to create the fellowship in honor of his late wife, Barbara Hays. The Barbara Hays Fellow will build upon and expand our Conservation Leadership program, helping provide capacity to address our most complex problems, while receiving technical assistance and support from John in order to build the skills and confidence needed to become one our next generation of leaders.



WOLVES

PCEC successfully lobbied for the Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission to reinstate a 6-wolf hunting quota for the hunting district bordering Yellowstone, after more than 20 wolves were killed in one winter.

We are continuing this work through engaging in the new Montana Wolf Management Plan.



BEARS

Living in Park County, we are aware of the presence of our wildlife neighbors, particularly those like grizzly bears that are at the top of the food chain. We believe it is our responsibility to find ways to live with grizzlies and other wildlife in a respectful manner that causes the least harm.

PCEC continues to work with our partners to improve bear coexistence in the GYE.

- In 2022, we co-hosted the first annual Bear Fair at the Livingston Farmers Market.
- We successfully advocated for the City of Livingston to adopt the first-ever requirements in a new subdivision that trash be stored inside or in a bear-resistant garbage can.
- After grizzlies started feeding in a county green box site, we lobbied Park County officials to upgrade garbage collection sites with electric fencing and automatic gates.

YELLOWSTONE SAFE PASSAGES

PCEC continues our partnership with Yellowstone Safe Passages with ongoing advocacy and support to help improve the interaction between traveling humans and wildlife. The threat of wildlife-vehicle collisions is all too familiar for those of us in the Yellowstone ecosystem.

Last year, YSP conducted numerous community meetings to help educate the public and to solicit important feedback. Community mapping exercises are helping determine areas of greatest danger to pinpoint how best to minimize accidents.

YSP's top priority this year is completion of a fine-scale highway assessment on Highway 89 between Livingston and Gardiner. Led by the Center for Large Landscape Conservation and the Western Transportation Institute, the assessment will provide important data and information about what mitigation measures – signage, fencing, overpass/underpass – make the most sense.



Did you know that 50 percent of all reported accidents on Highway 89 involve wildlife?

We are deeply grateful for your support in 2022.

\$681,705	\$802,340	\$779,437
Total Budget	Income	Expenses

2022 was another strong year financially for PCEC. PCEC's 2022 budget was \$681,705. Like 2021, 2022 income and expenses were higher than projected, with an actual income of \$802,340 and expenses of \$779,437. We invested some of the surplus income into taking care of PCEC staff by increasing salaries that had fallen behind inflation. We also made a contribution to the Tom Murphy Reserve Fund, ensuring we have a strong and sustainable financial future.

We are proud to report that 58% of our overall funding comes from community philanthropy — from supporters just like you. PCEC received gifts from 364 generous people in 2022, ranging from \$10 to as much as \$100,000!

Thanks to the generous support from foundations, PCEC raised \$283,372 in 2022, 35% of our total income. These include AMB West Philanthropies, Park County Community Foundation, the Liz Claiborne and Art Ortenberg Foundation, the High Stakes Foundation, Patagonia, Cinnabar Foundation, the Kendeda Fund, Glassybaby Foundation, Clif Family Foundation and the Maki Foundation. The remaining 7% of income comes from special projects and events.

We are deeply grateful for your support in 2022. Thank you.
Erica Lighthiser

Full financials available upon request.



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YELLOWSTONE GATEWAY · 30K

Sunday, September 17, 2023

Come run beautiful Paradise Valley and Emigrant Gulch! The race covers 18 miles of trail and rugged dirt and gravel roads. It begins at Sage Lodge and travels over 3,000 feet up Emigrant Gulch before descending to the finish at Chico Hot Springs where lunch is provided for runners.

As directors and racers, we are committed to sustainability and choose to tread lightly and steward the landscape responsibly.



Scan the code to register
or to get more information

