



**PARK COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL**

## **Strategic Plan**

### **Introduction**

Park County Environmental Council (PCEC), a community-based conservation group, works to protect the lands, water and wildlife on the doorstep of Yellowstone. PCEC serves as the first line of defense and leads local efforts to defend our backyard. We empower residents, neighbors and elected officials to speak for this unique place and our shared values. PCEC succeeds by proactively building strong community partners who work together to create more resilient ecosystems, communities and economies in Yellowstone's gateway.

Located within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, on the northern border of Yellowstone National Park, PCEC members live in the gateway to Yellowstone. PCEC and its members serve as local stewards of 979,684 acres of public land within Park County (57% of the county) as well the pristine waters of the Yellowstone River, West Boulder River, the Shields River and their many tributaries. The people, the wildlife and the economy in Yellowstone's gateway cherish these public lands and waters.

Since 1990, PCEC has served as a leading local advocate for environmental issues with both regional and national significance in our community including hardrock mining, wildlife management (wolves, grizzly bears and bison), habitat impacts due to climate change, loss of agricultural land to development pressures, drought, invasive species, water management. Over the years, PCEC has proven an effective and valued community partner and built a foundation that can grow in response to community needs. PCEC's recent work defending Yellowstone's gateway from industrial gold mining demonstrates the need and value of effective grassroots organizing in Yellowstone's gateway. In response to this threat, the organizational scope and budget increased steadily over the past several years. To shape and guide PCEC's priorities, PCEC's board and staff engaged in a comprehensive strategic planning process in 2016.

This strategic plan will serve as a foundation that can live and grow as community, and organizational priorities shift, and sets forth organizational goals and priorities through 2022.

## **Executive Summary**

PCEC serves as the lead conservation advocacy organization working collaboratively with partner organizations and community members to maintain the rural character of our community and create a local voice for the lands, water and wildlife in Yellowstone's northern gateway. PCEC's unique strength is its depth of community relationships. Through frequent public events, communications and meetings, we arm Park County residents with facts and data about local environmental issues of regional and national significance. PCEC trains and activates citizens, increasing engagement in local governance, and enabling members to contribute their unique skills to conservation issues in their own backyard.

### **Values:**

- We are equipped to respond quickly to environmental issues in our community.
- We use creative solutions to solve controversial problems.
- We represent a local perspective on a range of environmental questions.
- We create a cultures of fairness and open-minded thinking about differing opinions on environmental issues.
- We train and empower Park County citizens to become more engaged in conservation issues, including land-use and development decisions.
- We build strategic, bi-partisan partnerships with organizations, local government, businesses and community members.
- We take a balanced approach to economic success and the preservation of the natural environment.
- We safeguard beauty and natural ecosystems of our county and strive to preserve them for our children and grandchildren, and all future generations.
- We work to preserve the County's rural character, open space, and access to public lands.

**Mission statement:** *"PCEC works to safeguard the land, water, wildlife and rural character of Yellowstone's Northern Gateway through a community-based advocacy network."*

**By 2022 PCEC will be known and valued for its** consistent record of conservation accomplishments through a nonpartisan, open-minded collaboration with the community, partner organizations and the majority of Park County residents. We will successfully thwart major industrial threats, help build a shared community land-use plan protecting our open space, waters, wildlife, and rural character. PCEC will build a strong network of advocates who regularly engage with city and county decision-making related to our lands, water, wildlife and community.

## **Our Vision**

### ***For the Land***

- PCEC advocates for and participates in pro-active planning efforts that respect shared community resources and guides commercial, residential and industrial development.
- PCEC builds network of residents that advocate for land-use policies at City and County.
- PCEC thwarts short-sighted development and industrial threats.
- PCEC works with community partners and agencies to maintain public lands and access to public lands for future generations.

### ***For the Water***

- PCEC collaborates with diverse stakeholders to build community conservation efforts for Yellowstone River.
- PCEC educates the community about future and current threats to our water resource including climate change, drought, and invasive species; as well as the increased pressures of stakeholder use and development.

### ***For the Wildlife***

- PCEC advocates for sound science to guide wildlife management decisions in Yellowstone's northern gateway.
- PCEC works with private/public partnership to identify and preserve critical wildlife habitat and migration corridors in Yellowstone's northern gateway.

### ***For our Community***

- PCEC works with local partners to identify community issues and engage in community development in Park County and local municipalities, including the City of Livingston.
- PCEC supports conservation initiatives in our public schools and collaborates with teachers and students.
- PCEC Maintains relationships with stakeholders and partner organizations to leverage resources and build opportunities for community engagement.
- PCEC engages community members in trail maintenance and expansion of community trails.

## **Activities and Outcomes for PCEC Programs and Projects:**

### ***The Land***

#### **Mining in Yellowstone's gateway.**

**Goal:** Permanently protect Yellowstone's Gateway from industrial gold mining.

#### **Activities:**

1. Amplify and promote local voices through the Yellowstone Gateway Business Coalition.
2. Develop and implement a shared campaign plan with coalition partners at the local, state and national level.
3. Protect public lands through the administrative process.
4. Achieve permanent protection through legislation.
5. Protect private lands through strategic land purchases and local land-use policies.

#### **Program outcomes**

In 2017, Work with YGBC and Senator Jon Tester to craft and introduce a bill (Yellowstone Gateway Protection Act) to permanently protect Yellowstone's gateway from industrial mining.

In 2017, Park County residents use local land-use tools to advocate for a time-out on mining in Emigrant Gulch and Crevice Mountain.

In 2018, Secretary Zinke signs a final agency decision to protect minerals on approximately 30,000 acres of public lands in Yellowstone's Gateway from industrial gold mining.

By 2020, the Yellowstone Gateway Protection Act is signed into law.

By 2022, facilitate private acquisition of strategic private land parcels within the mining districts. Those private lands are returned to public control and provide public access to recreation areas.

#### **Local Land-Use and Community Development:**

**Goal:** Park County relies upon comprehensive land-use tools, including community-driven zoning and conservation easements to preserve and protect private lands, open space, water, and agriculture.

**Goal:** Local land-use regulations provide community members and county officials oversight to evaluate industrial projects on a case-by-case scenario.

**Activities:**

1. Work with diverse stakeholders in Park County to ensure community voices and priorities are represented in Park County’s local governance at the County, City and other local governments.
2. Work with land-use professional to summarize local land-use initiatives and to create online resources to disseminate information about opportunities to influence decision-making.
3. Build community support for local control of land-use issues through one-on-one meetings with neighbors.
4. Build a coalition of community partners who serve on a steering committee and lead a community-driven land-use planning program that allows county-level review of industrial development in Park County.

**Program outcomes:**

In 2017, pass a comprehensive growth policy for Park County with broad support from residents.

In 2018, launch Park County growth website with well-branded information about land-use planning and opportunities to influence local decision-making.

By 2020, Park County establishes and implements conservation planning tools that preserve critical corridors and wildlife habitat, protects Park County’s water resources, and promotes healthy communities.

By 2020, Park County passes zoning regulations to allow local review of industrial threats to the public health and safety in Park County.

**Access to Public Lands**

**Goal:** Protect access to public lands and preserve USFS trails in the Crazy Mountains

**Activities:**

1. Build community partnerships with diverse user-groups, motorized and non-motorized, to work together to maintain trails and historic trailheads.
2. Attend USFS meetings with landowners to advocate for public access.
3. Engage legal experts to evaluate the current status of access points in the Crazy Mountains.

**Program Outcomes:**

Consolidate public lands and improve access to public lands in the Crazy Mountains.

## ***The Water:***

**Goal:** Stakeholders in Park County participate in a collaborative conservation effort for the upper Yellowstone watershed.

### **Activities:**

1. PCEC creates opportunities for community investment in water conservation and system connectivity (flow) that protects the aquatic ecosystem, water quality and availability of both the Upper Yellowstone River watershed and the Shields River watershed
2. PCEC works with local organizations (TU, FOAM, MARS & Park Co. CD) and State and Federal agencies (FWP, DNRC & YNP), to address key water quality/quantity issues, and promote effective solutions for improving water conservation in the Yellowstone and Shields river watersheds by all stakeholders.

### **Program Outcomes:**

Maintaining existing water quality and riparian health in the upper Yellowstone and Shields watersheds, and protect the ecosystem from further degradation and impact from development and overuse.

Build upon existing conservation efforts to restore impacted areas of fisheries and riparian habitat to more naturally functioning ecosystems.

## ***The Wildlife:***

**Goal:** Park County prioritizes preservation of wildlife habitat and migration corridors with local tools and advocacy.

### **Activities:**

1. Work with local and regional wildlife organizations and decision makers to secure state-level protections for the Yellowstone Grizzly in Park County and other areas surrounding YNP.
2. Host an annual photography contest to celebrate Park County's wildlife.
3. Partner with local scientists, wildlife photographers and business owners to educate residents about grizzly bear management.
4. Work with state wildlife managers to develop sound management plan that is guided by the best available science.

### **Program Outcomes:**

Permanent protection of Yellowstone's grizzly bears from hunting and habitat loss.

## ***The Community***

### **Community Conservation**

**Goal:** Conservation groups and other community partners in Park County develop a shared community sustainability plan for Livingston and surrounding communities that encourages active transportation, maintains open space and protects riparian ecosystem.

#### **Activities:**

1. Work with community partners, the Active Transportation Coalition and city/county parks and trails to promote community connectivity, safe travel corridors for pedestrians and to identify open space.
2. Build community partnerships with schools, businesses, civic groups and agriculture.
3. Establish a network of local nonprofit partners to meet regularly and discuss best practices, lessons learned.

#### **Program Outcomes:**

A pedestrian/bike path runs through Park County from Gardiner to Emigrant that is managed by community members and advertised/promoted through local businesses.

Park High launches a high school environmental club to help find local solutions to protect our environment, including recycling and composting on campus.

L-town Soup is a bi-annual community micro-granting event that supports creative community projects.

## **Conclusion**

PCEC board and staff believe that community-based conservation efforts will preserve the rural landscapes and open lands in our community and help lead the way to lasting protections for the public lands, wildlife and pristine waters in Yellowstone's northern gateway.

PCEC's strategic plan outlines our work, but we will remain flexible to new and changing challenges in our community. PCEC recognizes that we cannot succeed without support and buy-in from community partners, members and volunteers. We look forward to working with you.