

PROTECTING BIG SKY'S OPEN LANDSCAPES



Montana Land Reliance and Gallatin River Task Force are partnering to protect land and water in Big Sky.



The Montana Land Reliance (MLR)

is a private, nonprofit, accredited land trust that partners with private landowners to permanently protect agricultural lands, fish and wildlife habitat, and open space. MLR is

among the most effective land conservation organizations in the nation, protecting an average of 27,000 acres annually, and over 1M acres total since 1979. As the largest statewide land trust in the country, MLR plays a leading role in championing conservation incentives that have facilitated conservation around the nation. MLR holds more than 850 conservation easements across Montana, with landowners as diverse as the special places they have protected. These landowners have partnered with MLR to perpetually conserve landscapes in every corner of the state and the places in between.



The Gallatin River Task Force

is the only nonprofit working to protect the Upper Gallatin River. Our mission is to partner with our community to inspire stewardship of the Gallatin River Watershed. Growing from humble beginnings in 2000 to expand watershed

monitoring in our area, we have since developed a valuable database on the health of the Gallatin valley and the streams that nourish it. Using science and data to inform about conservation projects, we prioritize collaboration among local, regional, and state agencies, and other nonprofits, schools, and volunteers to execute on the ground projects that restore and protect our watershed.



Protected land and water in Big Sky



11,425

TOTAL ACRES

of land conserved in Big Sky valued at

\$8,310,704*

**includes all conservation easements and publicly dedicated open space*

About a quarter of all private land is permanently protected in Big Sky.

TOTAL EASEMENT ACREAGE

with the Montana Land Reliance:

9,816

Total Elk Habitat:

9,064

Miles of Stream/Riverbank:

29



Forests

7,185 TOTAL ACRES

\$7,479,833



Grassland & Sagebrush

3,400 TOTAL ACRES

\$501,101



Water

301 TOTAL ACRES

\$272,791

Big Sky's land and water are integral parts of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. These protected open spaces span public and private lands and provide critical resources and habitat connectivity for fish and wildlife.

Ecosystem services are the products of nature that benefit people.

To help us better understand the value of ecosystem services, economists and scientists can measure the dollar value of what an acre of conserved land gives back to people annually.

The Montana Land Reliance has determined a return on investment of land conservation and open space preservation in Big Sky. The benefits of protecting land and water are expected to continue to accrue and even increase into the future as open lands decrease due to rising population and development in the area.

How do protected land and water benefit us in Big Sky?

Protecting wetlands, forests, and sagebrush and grassland habitats are essential to maintaining functional ecosystems in Big Sky and beyond.

Wetlands provide: Water quality protection, habitat, pollution filtration, groundwater recharge, and flood control.

Forests provide: Air pollution removal, carbon sequestration, carbon storage, water quality protection, erosion control, and wildlife habitat.

Sagebrush and Grasslands provide: Carbon sequestration, biodiversity, habitat, pollination services, and natural heritage.



In high country areas like Big Sky, land and water conservation have important implications for downstream and instream users.

Healthier, more intact ecosystems will absorb more water, release it more slowly, and retain more productive soil than land developed without the larger ecosystems in mind.

How can you protect land and water and the values they provide for the Big Sky Community?

Practice daily Water Wise strategies and encourage your neighbors to do the same. Be mindful of how you use water at home, work, and school. Use water-saving products and fixtures. Learn more at www.gallatinrivertaskforce.org/waterconservation/.

Consider conservation easements. Conservation easements are the only tool available to perpetually protect private land containing some of the richest habitat, water, and soils in Montana. These easements benefit the public in perpetuity even if the land remains in private ownership. Learn more at <http://mtlandreliance.org/conservation-easements/>.



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Additional Resource:

Investing in Colorado, a study from Colorado State University, 2017