



BLACKFOOT CHALLENGE

2016 Annual Report

Photo by Mannix Brothers Ranch

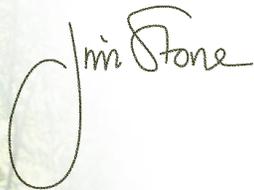
Message from the **Chairman**

On the heels of one of the worst drought years we've had in the Blackfoot, I'm thankful to see the snowpack holding up high. While this year might give us a breather, 10 years of drought out of the last 17 sends us a message we cannot ignore. But as the challenges that face us evolve, so do the opportunities to respond.

To better prepare for changing conditions, we are working with our partners across the watershed to adopt a more holistic approach to resilience. Through a new program focused on soil health, we are building long-term drought resilience while enhancing crop production, reducing weeds, and improving the overall health of the landscape. Through a proactive approach to reducing conflicts with bears, we've been able to minimize conflicts with wolves as well, and have built the relationships necessary to address long-term challenges like elk grazing on private lands.

The complexity of these issues also reminds us how much we rely on one another. As we adapt to changing conditions here in the Blackfoot, we recognize that we are part of a much larger landscape. Our neighbors face the same challenges we do, whether they relate to balancing water needs during drought, reducing conflicts with grizzly bears or keeping our communities thriving as economies change. We're all in this together and I truly believe relationships are the most powerful tool in the conservation toolbox.

I am very proud of what we've built together here in the Blackfoot, and I know that together we can achieve even more. My gratitude goes out to each of you for your continued support and partnership.



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Rolling Stone Ranch, Ovando
Blackfoot Challenge Board Chair



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* Board Partner ** Board Advisor

Conservation

CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

Coordinating land conservation and stewardship to keep working landscapes intact.

- Held annual meeting with public and private partners in February
- Coordinated numerous Clearwater-Blackfoot Project workgroup and sub-workgroup meetings
- Co-hosted Revive & Thrive restoration work party at Tupper's Lake
- Over 130 residents attended public meetings in Bonner, Seeley and Greenough in August
- 5,475 acres on Clearwater-Blackfoot Project sold to the Bureau of Land Management in November



Photo by Joe Zimbric

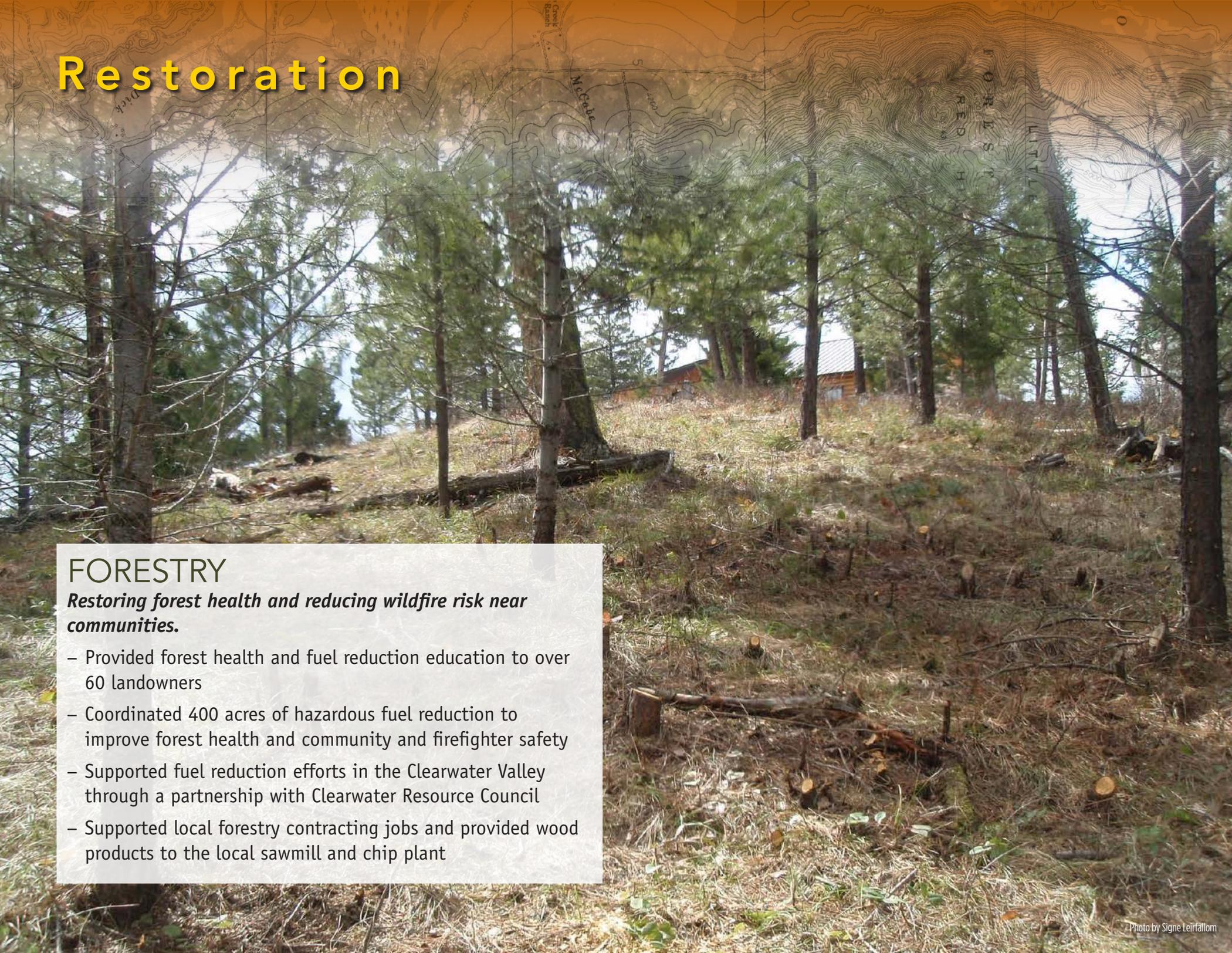


Photo by Justin Iverson



Photo by Darlene Troutwine

Restoration



FORESTRY

Restoring forest health and reducing wildfire risk near communities.

- Provided forest health and fuel reduction education to over 60 landowners
- Coordinated 400 acres of hazardous fuel reduction to improve forest health and community and firefighter safety
- Supported fuel reduction efforts in the Clearwater Valley through a partnership with Clearwater Resource Council
- Supported local forestry contracting jobs and provided wood products to the local sawmill and chip plant

Restoration

SWANS

Restoring Trumpeter Swans to their native habitat on Blackfoot wetlands since 2004.

- At least 8 Trumpeter Swan pairs nesting in the watershed in 2016
- 24 cygnets hatched and 18 fledged, the most since the program began
- Over 200 people participated in annual swan release, including 170 students



Stewardship

WILDLIFE

Reducing human-wildlife conflicts through proactive and preventative strategies.

- More than 250 carcasses removed from 35 Blackfoot ranches to reduce carnivore attraction
- 1 full- and 2 part-time range riders monitored wolf, bear and livestock activity across 40,000 acres
- Hired a seasonal elk hunt coordinator to assist landowners
- Hosted several meetings with landowners and Fish, Wildlife & Parks to address elk conflicts on private lands
- Monitored wolverine, lynx, fisher & wolf activity in the upper watershed during winter
- Hosted multiple tours to share our approach with other communities across the region



Photo by Joe Zimbric

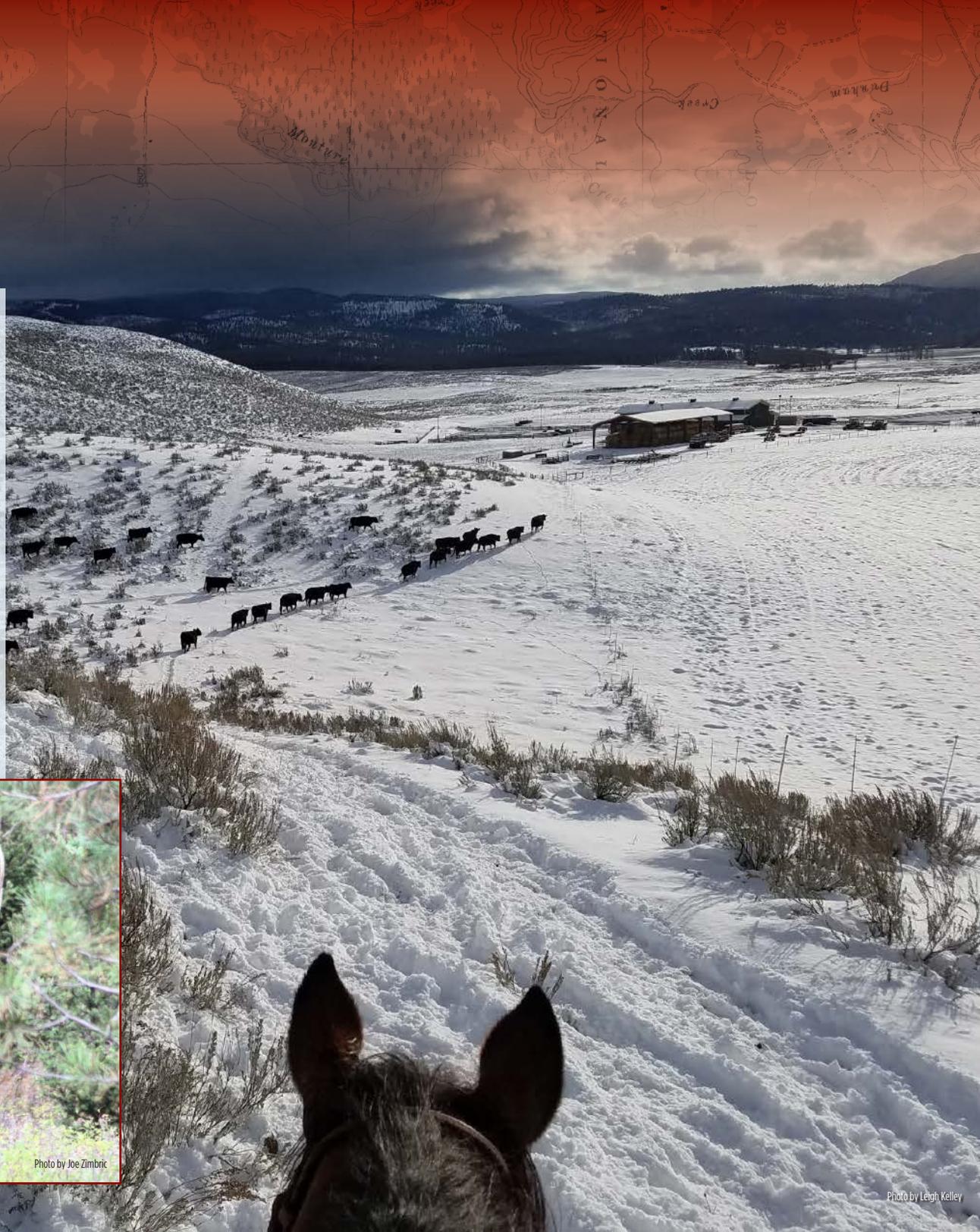


Photo by Leigh Kelley

Stewardship

WATER

Voluntary water conservation grounded in shared sacrifice and shared commitment.

- More than 100 irrigators received weekly guidance on soil and water management through irrigation scheduling reports
- Nearly 100 water users involved in water conservation during drought response
- Installed drought alert signs at 8 river access sites
- Monitored water quality on 11 streams, collecting hundreds of data points
- Taught nearly 200 students about stream flow monitoring, macroinvertebrates and fish
- Installed first climate station in the Blackfoot to monitor weather and soil moisture



Photo by Jennifer Schoonen

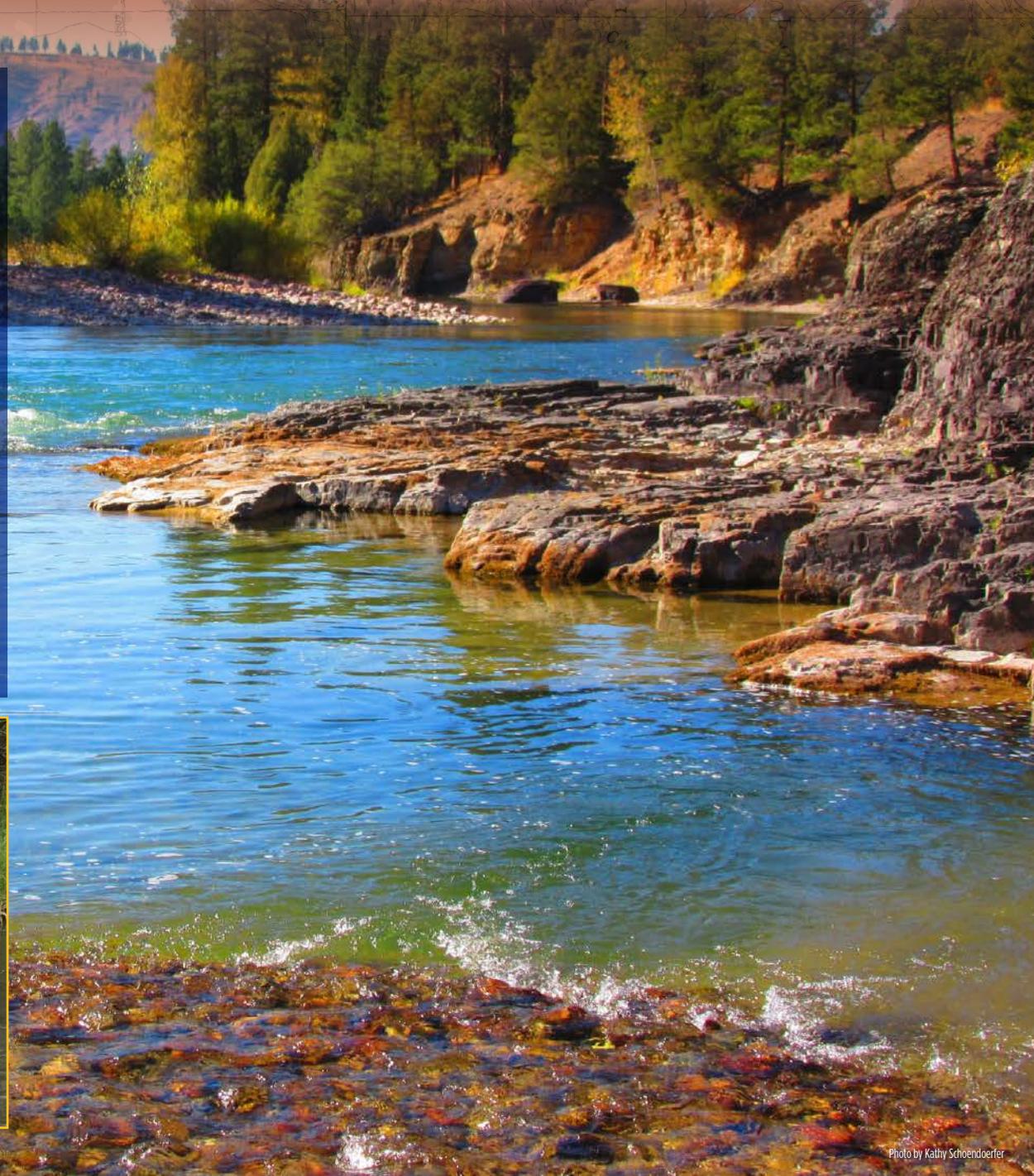


Photo by Kathy Schoendoerfer

Stewardship

BLACKFOOT COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AREA

*5,600 acres managed
cooperatively by community
council for multiple uses.*

- Coordinated with neighbors for over 100 acres of weeds treated
- Monitored rotational cattle grazing on two leases with adjacent ranchers
- Completed forest restoration on 560 acres to improve forest health, wildlife habitat and support local contractors and mills
- Provided outdoor classroom for Ovando students collecting stream and forestry data
- Continued coordinating year-round public access for motorized and non-motorized uses
- Updated the Management Plan for the Core



Photo by Sara Schmidt



Photo by Alex Barton

Stewardship



WEEDS

Integrated, locally-led approaches to invasive plant management across fence lines.

- Provided coordination and support for the newly-formed Garnet Mountains and Lincoln Vegetation Management Areas
- Treated approximately 40 acres along the Blackfoot River Corridor with 26 partners
- Administered weed management agreements with the Lolo and Helena National Forests
- Presented at regional and national invasive species symposiums
- Educated adults and youth at numerous meetings, weed pulls and events

Outreach



OUTREACH

Sharing the community-based and partnership-centered approach with others.

- Reached nearly 5,000 individuals through workshops, tours and presentations in the watershed and at regional and national events
- Co-hosted Resource Stewardship Fair at the Sculpture Park in Lincoln
- Over 100 members attended Annual Meeting at Paws Up in December
- Initiated internship program for college and graduate students
- Initiated “The Blackfoot Steward” resource stewardship newsletter

EDUCATION

Nurturing watershed awareness and stewardship through place-based education.

- Over 150 students learned about ranching in the Blackfoot at Youth Field Day
- Students from five schools collected local stream and forest data
- Visiting Speakers program reached over 100 students monthly
- Over 100 visitors saw birds up close at bird banding station in Seeley Lake
- Pure Montana Tales brought presentations on archaeology, pollinators, and more
- Worked with volunteer citizen scientists to collect stream flow and water quality data on 11 streams



FINANCIALS

The Board of Directors approves an annual operating budget funded from secured private donations, public awards and agreements, and allocations from investments. Oversight is provided by the Finance and Endowment Committees.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION (Dec 31, 2016)

UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS

UNRESTRICTED \$ 478,965

ENDOWMENTS

Blackfoot Stewardship Fund \$ 643,487

BCCA Fund \$ 404,285

BOARD DESIGNATED \$ 135,011

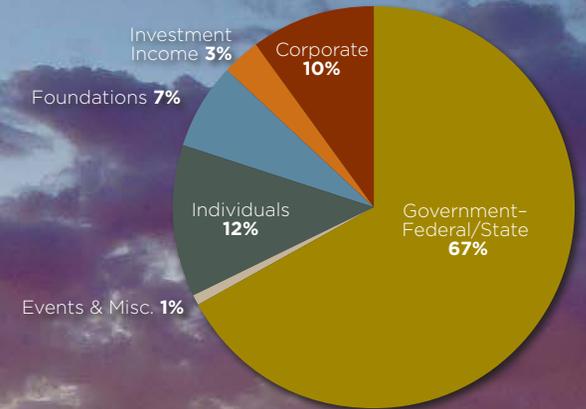
BLACKFOOT COMMUNITY
CONSERVATION AREA (LAND) \$ 1,891,284

TOTAL ASSETS \$ 3,553,032

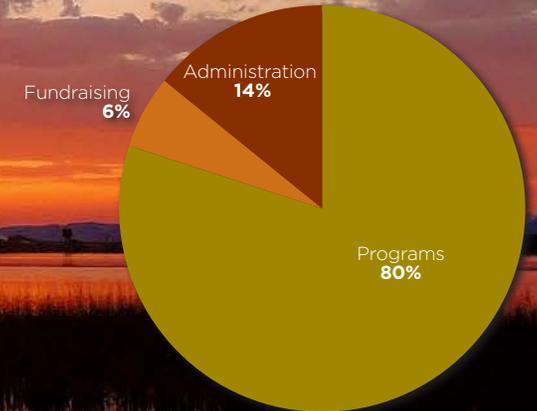
TOTAL LIABILITIES (\$ 51,665)

TOTAL NET ASSETS \$ 3,501,367

SOURCE OF FUNDS \$1,203,795



USE OF FUNDS \$1,148,861



A heartfelt thanks to our many 2016 Annual Fund donors! For a complete list of supporters, please view our online annual report at www.blackfootchallenge.org.

Blackfoot Challenge, Inc PO Box 103/405 Main St. ■ Ovando, MT 59854 ■ 406-793-3900 ■ outreach@blackfootchallenge.org

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We extend enormous gratitude to our many 2016 donors! The majority of our projects are funded with public, private and foundation grants, while gifts from private individuals are critical to match and coordinate these project funds. Your support in 2016 made our work possible.

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