OPEN SPACES

Connecting People and Place

Sagebrush

Steppe Land Trust

For Generations To Come

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Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust
109 N. Arthur Ave., Suite 300
PO Box 1404
Pocatello, ID 83204
208.240.6045
www.sagebrushlandtrust.org

Mission
To protect and enhance natural lands, wildlife habitat, and working farms and ranches in Southeastern Idaho, now and for future generations.

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Thorpe Fundraising Solutions

Legal Advisors
Andy Wayment

Contributors to This Newsletter

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Alice Hearst

Front Cover Photo
Summer at Deep Creek,
SSLT's Property
in Franklin County

2020 Events

Please check our website, www.sagebrushlandtrust.org, or call our office for details as we get closer to these event dates. Depending on Covid-19, we may have to cancel any or all of these events.

Saturday, June 20: Wildflower spotting on Thunder Ridge! Join us for a wildflower hike with mountain and lake views on a gorgeous Bear Lake Valley property. Bring a lunch, snacks, and water. Admission free.

Thursday, July 2: Bill Davidson BBQ- Help us celebrate conservation heroes! We'll honor Bill's lifetime of service by awarding the Bill Davidson Conservation Award to a local conservation hero – a dedicated, long-term volunteer steward of southeastern Idaho's wildlife, waterways and landscape. Join us the evening of July 2nd for a cookout with all the trimmings.

Saturday, September 19: Hike Oneida Canyon- Hike from the Bear River allll the way up to the bluffs during some of the most beautiful fall scenery in Idaho. Be prepared for a steep climb and descent, but the views will make it all worthwhile. Bring your lunch and lots of water. Most of this hike will be on private land conserved by PacifiCorp and the Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust. Admission free.

DATE TBD: Raise a beer for conservation at Jim Dandy Brewing in Pocatello! Jim Dandy will host a pint night in the fall to benefit Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust. Have a beer and hear the latest conservation news.

DATE TBD: Fall Volunteer Restoration and Cleanup Days on our Kackley Bear River and Century Heights properties. Stay tuned for details.

Thursday, December 3: Holiday Party & Fundraiser! Celebrate a year's worth of conservation with us at our fabulous Holiday Party! You'll find more details in our Fall newsletter. We can promise you now good company, excellent libations and great food.

Conservation During Covid-19

As we go to press at the end of April, we're working remotely and complying with the Governor's stay-home orders. We're not keeping office hours, but we are negotiating conservation easements, writing grants and advancing projects. Our board is drafting an operations plan to help keep our staff, members, partners and general public safe should the stay-home order be lifted May 1.

We're concerned about the potential impact the pandemic and recession will have on our revenue this year. We know many of our supporters are anxious about their families, their health and their finances. If you're able to make local conservation a priority, please give to the Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust. Every dollar you give will help us protect land here, and leverage more funds for conservation in southeastern Idaho. Thank you.

Springtime

BY GEOFF HOGANDER

I love springtime. The colors of the land are changing. A fresh flush of green paints the landscape with the signs of a new beginning. Birds are returning, singing to announce their presence in their newly-staked nesting territories.

And the flowers are coming out. Little ones to start. One of the first is Hood's or spiny phlox, *Phlox hoodii*. It's a small, often mat-forming little plant with white five-petaled flowers and spiny leaves. You'll find it growing between larger plants on sunny sage-covered slopes on the foothills around town.

Another little flower that shows up early is yellow bells, *Fritillaria pudica*. This little lily is more commonly found closer to the melting snow-line and often under larger plants that shade it from direct sun and provide a micro habitat with more moisture. Its nodding flower makes it obvious where the name comes from.

The taper-tip onion, *Allium acuminatum*, is also an "early riser" in the spring. Found on open hillsides, the pretty lavender flowers are distinctive and can be plucked to be used as a garnish in a salad where it lends color and a very strong onion flavor.

Another blossom that appears about the same time is the much showier and larger foothill death camas, *Toxicoscordion paniculatum*. It has a bulb like an onion and a tall panicle of white flowers. It is another species found in small openings mixed with sagebrush. This one, however, is not one to include in a salad since the name comes from the Greek, toxicos, poison and scordion, garlic.

The local chapter of the Idaho Native Plant Society has plant walks most Monday evenings and Saturday mornings in May and June if you are interested in learning more about our local flora. These outings are announced in the Community Calendar in the Idaho State Journal. Or to learn more about the Idaho Native Plant Society you can go to www.idahonativeplants.org

Hood's phlox, *Phlox hoodia*

Yellow bells, *Fritillaria pudica*

At right:
Taper-tip onion,
Allium acuminatum

At left:
Foothill death camas,
Toxicoscordion paniculatum

All photos on this page by Mel Nicholls

Egley Farms – Generations of Stewardship

The word generational can mean different things to different people. In this little corner of Idaho, where much of the land is comprised of rows of crops and grazing livestock, generational is usually followed by the word landowner. Because here, farming and ranching is not a fleeting profession. It is something that is so completely engrained in those who do it that it is practically genetic.

So it is for Kent Egley and his family. The Egleys live and work a 450-acre farm along Mink Creek in Franklin County, that, in November, 2019, the Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust permanently protected with a conservation easement.

"My son Jared said 'Everything good that I learned about life, was learned on the hills above Mink Creek following my grandfather.' I think that that's a value that's been in our family for the generations since they came here."

That value inspired Kent to approach the Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust with the idea of putting a conservation easement on his property. The ground that Kent now plows is the very ground his great-grandfather homesteaded at the end of the 19th century. Kent's son, Jared, walks the same creek bottom with his children that he did with his grandfather when he was a boy. To the Egleys, generational is woven into their very being, as is the land that they have been living and working for five generations.

Jared Egley sees the generations that came before him and understands that land is worth much more than the money it could be sold for.

"Even if I had the opportunity to subdivide and develop this property, you might make a little bit of money or a lot of money. But then, that's it," said Jared.

The Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust saw the development pressure that is taking place in Franklin County and the incredible conservation values of the Egley property and made it a priority to protect it in perpetuity with a conservation easement.

SSLT partnered with the Bear River Environmental Coordination Committee (ECC) to get the job done. The ECC's primary focus is to restore, enhance, and protect Bonneville cutthroat trout (BCT) – a species unique to the Bear River watershed in need of special attention and protection.

The .71 miles of Mink Creek that runs through the Egley property supports BCT along with many other fish and wildlife. Because of this, the ECC was willing to fund the conservation easement and most of the due diligence needed to complete the project.

Protecting the Egley property was a team effort. The Charitable Cross Foundation, the Steele-Reese Foundation, and a private family foundation all contributed to the project as well. Kent Egley donated a generous portion of the conservation easement's value. In addition, SSLT's many generous donors made it possible for staff to put in the considerable time that is always needed for conservation easement transactions.

On November 8th, 2019, all the people and all the work were worth it when the Egleys and SSLT signed and recorded the conservation easement, ensuring that those 450 acres of rolling hills and .71 miles of Mink Creek are protected from development forever.

To Kent Egley, the conservation easement added to his family's legacy.

"We feel like we've been pretty good stewards of the land in the past and that's what we want to continue," Kent said, "My biggest concern is that it's not turned into a housing development because we love it the way it is."

Conserve More Land with a Gift to Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust

We estimate that every dollar you give today will help raise another $14.28 this year for land conservation in southeastern Idaho. Your gift today will help conserve hundreds of acres of wildlife habitat, working farms and ranches this year – right here at home.

For those of you who don't itemize, Congress recently authorized a $300 charitable deduction just for this year.

Please consider donating all or a portion of your $300 charitable deduction to the Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust. Want to know more about the one-time deduction? Check out https://www.kiplinger.com/slideshow/taxes/T054-S001-cares-act-expands-charitable-giving-tax-deductions/index.html.

"The eyes of the future are looking back at us and they are praying for us to see beyond our own time."

-Terry Tempest Williams, Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place.

Priscilla Hearst: A Positive Force in the World

In these pages, we honor two women who saw beyond their own time. Priscilla Hearst and Kaye Merriam made our future better by giving children better lives and caring for the natural world and its creatures.

Priscilla grew up believing that she could have a positive impact in the world, one person at a time. She married Joe Hearst in 1949 and the couple moved to Pocatello, where Joe was offered a job at Idaho State College, subsequently Idaho State University.

For many years, Priscilla worked as a social worker for Bannock County. In the last fifteen years of her career, she was responsible for children in foster care across much of Southeast Idaho. She and Joe raised four children, imbuing them with a love of nature as they spent time hiking and enjoying the Idaho outdoors.

About a year after Joe's death in 1986, Priscilla retired from social work. Alice Hearst remembers: "My mother told us she needed to work for a population as voiceless as the children she shepherded through the foster care system." She became an ardent advocate for protecting the natural world.

Priscilla and Joe had long been birdwatchers. Her son Joe was a falconer during high school and college, which meant that there were often kestrels, a prairie falcon or two, and a few red-tailed hawks in residence.

She became president of the Portneuf Valley Audubon Society, and she reveled in the work. The Society sold birdseed and her old blue Chevy pickup was often loaded with 50 # bags of seed. "For many years," Alice says, "the house felt like a feed store."

When Priscilla retired from the presidency in her late 80s, she continued to watch and record birds. Her good friend, Scott McGee, constructed the Taj Majal of feeding stations attached to the deck off her kitchen.

As her life became more circumscribed, many friends and neighbors came to her aid, including Fred Belzer and his wife and Clay and Chris Grayson, along with many, many friends from the Pocatello Valley Audubon Society. Her caregiver, Jill was very close to her and helped her immensely as she continued feeding the birds.

After a long life of service to people and wildlife, Priscilla died at the age of 91 of natural causes. She is survived by her children, Jonena, the geologist at Guadalupe National Park in Texas; Alice, a professor of Government at Smith College in Northampton, MA, and Joe Hearst III, an appellate lawyer in Berkeley, CA. She was predeceased by her daughter Melissa, a lands specialist with Region 4 in the US Department of Agriculture.

Priscilla was adamant that efforts be made to preserve habitat for both animals and birds. She donated a significant portion of her estate to the Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust to ensure that habitat might be preserved.

Priscilla's legacy will help Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust steward lands protected in southeastern Idaho under permanent conservation agreements.

Published with thanks to Alice and Jonena Hearst, who furnished most of the narrative and the photographs for this article.

Kay Merriam: A Legacy of Giving

The City of Pocatello lost one of its most distinguished citizens this past December. Kay Merriam was dedicated to education and was active in the community. She founded an education business, served as the Chair of the Bannock County Planning and Zoning Commission, stood as state and local president of the League of Women Voters, and was an Idaho State Journal correspondent. She was also passionate about the natural world and was a lifetime advocate for the environment.

Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust board member Greg McReynolds enjoyed working with Kay on a variety of projects. "She was a beautiful, vibrant person who cared deeply about the world around her. She had a great sense of humor and a knack for putting things in perspective."

Kay grew up exploring the outdoors in her home state of California. Family camping trips in Yosemite National Park and weekends at the family's Mt. Baldy cabin sparked her love of nature, and she met the man who would become her husband, John Merriam, while working in Yosemite as a teenager. When the newlyweds relocated to Pocatello in 1964, they fell in love with Idaho's natural beauty. Together, they worked to curtail molybdenum mining in the White Clouds and saw the area protected in 1970.

After Kay's death, her daughters decided to honor her lifetime of commitment to environmental issues by requesting donations be made to a nonprofit organization in tribute to her. Given Kay's deep love of the Idaho landscape, they felt that a conservation organization based locally in Pocatello would be ideal, and ultimately chose Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust.

In selecting a project that would best honor Kay's memory, Century Heights was the first that came to mind. The property's sunny hillsides, fragrant juniper stands, and expansive views of the City of Pocatello were protected in December 2018 when the property was donated to Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust.

Managing open spaces like this Century Heights is challenging work. It requires a team of dedicated staff, board members, and volunteers, as well as the resources to achieve management goals like posting signs, planning for wildfire, and completing restoration projects. The donations we've received in tribute to Kay will help us manage the property for the people who love it and the wildlife that depend on it, and its scenic open space will serve as a testament to this remarkable woman.

Century Heights provides habitat for Pocatello's wildlife.

Conservation Goals

Portneuf River Watershed & Snake River Plain

- Conserve a key link for mule deer migration in the Bannock Range that will conserve 1300 acres of working lands and critical wildlife habitat.
- Work with our Century Heights neighbors to create defensible space from wildfires and map and sign trails on our property to make it more accessible to the public. We also plan to host a volunteer work day in the fall. Partner with ISU to implement research plots to monitor sagebrush steppe habitat on Century Heights property.
- Explore opportunities to partner with local leaders on local conservation opportunities, such as the West Bench and the Portneuf River.
- Monitor three ranches we've conserved in this watershed.

Blackfoot River Watershed & Willow Creek Drainage

- Partner with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to restore six miles of the Blackfoot River in the Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area.
- Explore new conservation partnerships in the Willow Creek headwaters.
- Help the Habitat Improvement Team fund another round of high-quality conservation and restoration work in the vicinity of the Rasmussen Valley Mine. **Interested parties have until May 31 to submit proposals to conserve, restore or enhance wildlife habitat.** Sagebrush Steppe staff are distributing the request for proposals and assisting the Team in its review. Check out **https://seidahomitigationfund.com/** for application guidelines and form.
- Conduct field visits and reviews of conservation projects funded last year to make sure they're hitting the targets established for the mitigation fund.
- Monitor three ranches protected under conservation easement in this watershed.

for 2020 and 2021

Bear River Watershed

- Conserve 940 acres of working ranch and habitat for wildlife – including greater sage-grouse – in Bear Lake County near our Thunder Ridge Preserve.
- Partner with Bear River Land Conservancy and Intermountain West Joint Venture to hire staff to assist private landowners with land conservation options throughout the Bear River Watershed.
- Begin a new conservation project on Mink Creek in Franklin County to add 1,200 acres to the protected corridor along this critical spawning stream for Bonneville cutthroat trout.
- Enhance habitat for Bonneville cutthroat trout along the Kackley spring creek by planting native shrubs to help shade the stream.
- Implement new communications strategies to showcase the watershed and its national conservation significance.
- Monitor 15 properties protected under conservation easement in this watershed.

Curlew National Grassland

- Continue our partnership with the U. S. Forest Service and local community to restore a mile of the most severely impacted stretch of Rock Creek.

Building Operational Excellence

- Implement the communications and marketing plan Dr. Neil Tocher, Professor of Management at ISU, is developing for us with his graduate students. This plan will help us increase our membership and our conservation reach.
- Get our new staff off to a good start. We'll be training Kayla Bass in the intricacies of land trust financial management, project management and fundraising. We look forward to introducing her to you all. We'll continue to monitor the economy and pandemic to decide the best time to replace our Conservation Manager position.

New Board Members and Staff

We welcome three new board members with decades of experience, commitment and accomplishments in conservation and management. We are honored to have their service on the Sagebrush Steppe Board of Directors. We also welcome Kayla Bass, who takes on the job of Executive Assistant May 11th.

We bid fond farewells to board members Deb Mignogno and Linda Tigert and staff Kelly Conde, Sophie Jackson and James Bailey. We are deeply grateful to them for their years of dedicated service to conservation in southeastern Idaho. We look forward to staying in touch, whether on monitoring visits, volunteer days or out and about in Pocatello.

Please take a minute to read on and meet our new staff and board.

Terrell Blanchard, *Board Member*

A native of Oklahoma, Terrell obtained a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from Oklahoma State University in 1987. After several years working in a veterinary practice near Tulsa, OK, Terrell decided he needed a new career direction. He joined the US Army Veterinary Corps and kicked off a 21-year global experience, living in multiple states and three foreign countries. He retired in 2010 and began a second career as a manager of veterinary pathology in a global veterinary diagnostic company. Working remotely allowed him and his wife Karen to fulfill a lifelong dream of relocating in the vicinity of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. They moved to Pocatello in 2016 because of the wonderful environment, friendly neighbors, abundant outdoor opportunities for year-round recreation, and an affordable location to put down roots in this fantastic landscape. Terrell and Karen have long been supporters of all aspects of biological and environmental conservation, and spend most of their free time outdoors fishing, hunting, hiking, biking, rafting and skiing.

Greg McReynolds, *Board Secretary*

Greg McReynolds is an avid upland hunter and angler who lives in Pocatello with his wife Denise, three children, a Springer Spaniel and two English setters. He has worked for Trout Unlimited since 2007 with a focus on policy and state legislatures around the west.

Previously, Greg worked as a reporter, photographer and newspaper editor. He is a past board member of the Idaho Wildlife Federation and the Idaho Sportsman's Caucus Advisory Committee.

Greg brings non-profit experience and leadership to SSLT.

Dave Pacioretty, *Board Member*

Dave Pacioretty served with the BLM for 34 years, with extensive experience as a rangeland management specialist, field manager, associate district manager, and field office manager. In 2007, Dave's BLM career moved to Pocatello Idaho, where he held the position of BLM's Pocatello Field Office Manager until his retirement in 2017.

Dave and his wife Janet are proud parents to their son Alex, an Army Veteran and daughter Maria, currently a habitat biologist for Idaho Dept. Fish and Game. Janet recently retired from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

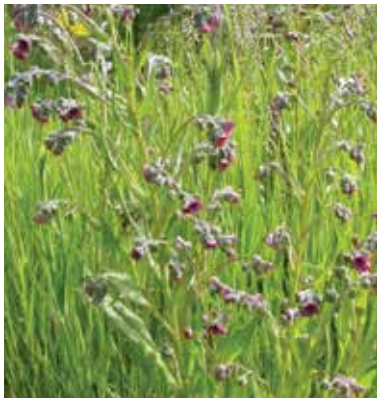
Dave has established an enduring legacy in land management and restoration, with an affinity for fisheries habitat and restoring and conserving rivers. Through cooperation and coordination with multiple partners, Dave worked to safeguard valuable land both for wildlife and for future generations.

Kayla Bass, *Staff- Executive Assistant*

Kayla earns a Bachelor's degree in Wildlife Ecology and Management from Utah State at the end of April and starts work with us on May 11th. She'll help Matt with projects and finances and Babette with fundraising and membership. In addition to her courses on wildlife ecology, Kayla took a number of business classes – a great mix for non-profit work. She served in the Youth Conservation Core at the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, removing phragmites, banding Canada geese and blue-winged teal and maintaining trails. She worked her way through college, and still managed to find time to volunteer at the Refuge, helping with public relations. She's also received certifications in first aid, which will make her a great asset during the monitoring season. We're excited to bring Kayla onboard and introduce her to you all.

Help Stop the Spread of Weeds

Thistles
Biennial with large painful thorns. Spreads primarily by wind and birds using thistle-down. Can grow up to six feet.



Houndstongue
A fuzzy biennial with small purple flowers and Velcro-like seeds. Spreads by attaching to livestock and human clothing.

Purple Loosestrife
A semi-aquatic perennial with purple flower stalks. Single plants can produce 2.5 million seeds a year. Still available for purchase as an ornamental.

Dyer's Woad
Biennial with yellow flowers and black hanging seeds. Covers thousands of acres in southeast Idaho and Utah.

Dalmatian Toadflax
Yellow "snap-dragon" flower with dark, waxy leaves. Spreads rhizomatically (roots) and via human transport due to ornamental beauty.

White Bryony
Perennial vine with small white flowers and red-black berries. Berries are toxic. Can overtake trees or fences in as little as a year. Spreads via seed consumption from birds.

What Can You Do?

- Clean off seeds from apparel, packs, and equipment in the place they were acquired or better yet, package and discard seeds appropriately.
- Do not pick or transplant unidentified plants.
- Report infestations using the Wild Spotter app.
- Find more information on identification, treatment, and reporting at idahoweedawareness.com.

New Gear, Courtesy of the Rocky Mountain Power Foundation

This year, our stewardship team is getting a boost from the Rocky Mountain Power Foundation. Through a Rocky Mountain Power Foundation grant, SSLT purchased brand-new binoculars, binocular straps, awesome 10-pocket field vests, and work gloves! The new equipment will facilitate more thorough, consistent, and accurate monitoring and will provide safeguards for staff and volunteers on habitat enhancement and restoration projects. The Rocky Mountain Power Foundation is one of the largest utility-endowed foundations in the United States. The Rocky Mountain Power Foundation was created in 1988 by PacifiCorp, an electric utility serving 1.8 million customers in six Western states as Rocky Mountain Power (Utah, Wyoming and Idaho) and Pacific Power (Oregon, Washington and California). The foundation's mission, through charitable investments, is to support the growth and vitality of the communities served by Rocky Mountain Power and Pacific Power. For more information, visit www.rockymountainpower.net/foundation or www.pacificpower.net/foundation.

Connecting People and Place

Sagebrush
Steppe Land Trust
For Generations To Come

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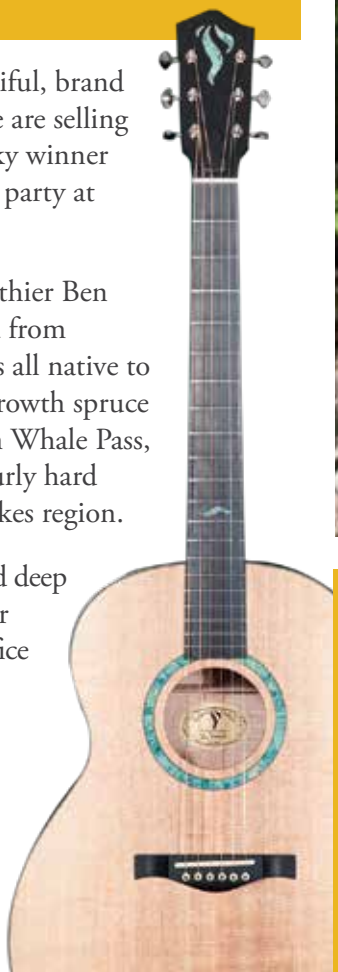
Play Music, Save Land

Buy a chance to win this beautiful, brand new, hand-crafted guitar. We are selling 20 tickets at $100 each. The lucky winner will be announced at our holiday party at year's end.

Handmade by Galloup School luthier Ben Padgett, this guitar is constructed from salvaged and sustainable materials all native to North America. The top is old-growth spruce salvaged from wind-fallen trees in Whale Pass, Alaska. The back and sides are curly hard maple sourced from the Great Lakes region.

The sound is full, well-rounded and deep – perfect for serenading someone or some place you love. When our office reopens, come by and check it out!

The proceeds from this raffle will help conserve land in southeastern Idaho. To purchase a ticket, email babette@sagebrushlandtrust.



Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) charitable organization incorporated in 2004, and a "qualified organization" within the meaning of section 170(h)(3) of the IRS Code.

Our mission is to protect and enhance natural lands, wildlife habitat, and working farms and ranches in Southeastern Idaho, now and for future generations.

Federal Tax Identification Number: 82-6092501.