



| 2024 Green River Valley Program Newsletter



Open Lands

Protect the Upper Green

Since taking on the role of GRVP director around this time last year, I have:

- Attended ten Sublette County community events and stakeholder meetings
- Spoken to six local groups about the role of conservation easements in our community
- Discussed the work of the GRVP with 12 community leaders and politicians
- Met with 15 landowners considering pursuing protections on their land
- Started four new protection projects that total about 1,500 acres of critical river corridors, migration paths, and working lands

The GRVP's presence is the strongest it has been in many years, and none of it would have been possible without the unwavering support of both my Land Trust peers and members of our community who want the Green River Valley to stay wild, open, and connected.

By supporting the GRVP, you are playing a vital role in ensuring that Wyoming remains a place of unparalleled natural beauty and ecological health through proactive land conservation. We now have an opportunity unlike any before to make truly meaningful strides in protecting our open spaces, wildlife habitats, ranches, and Western heritage.

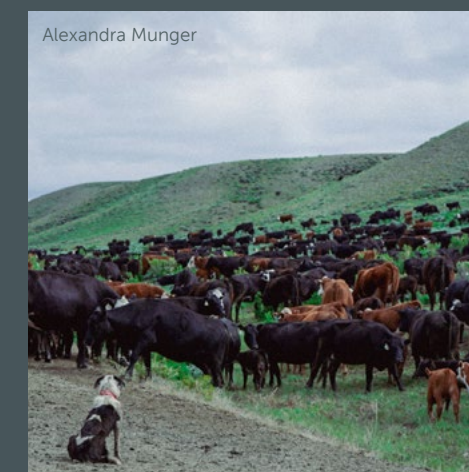
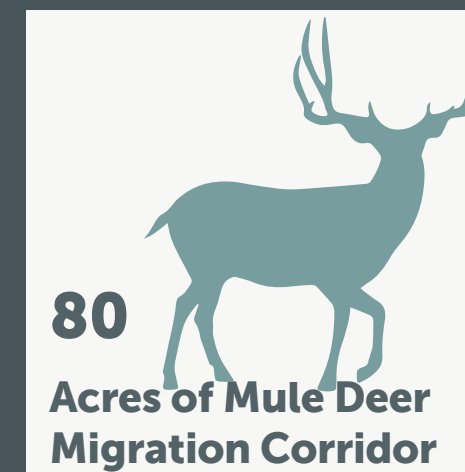
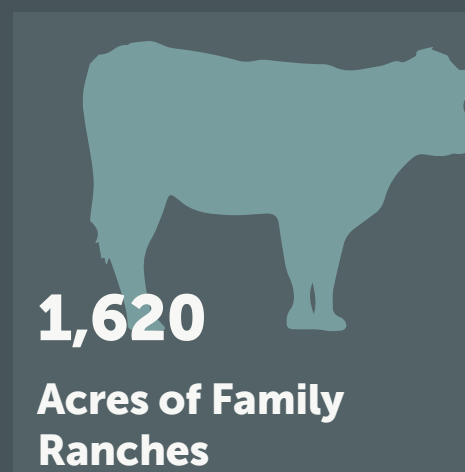
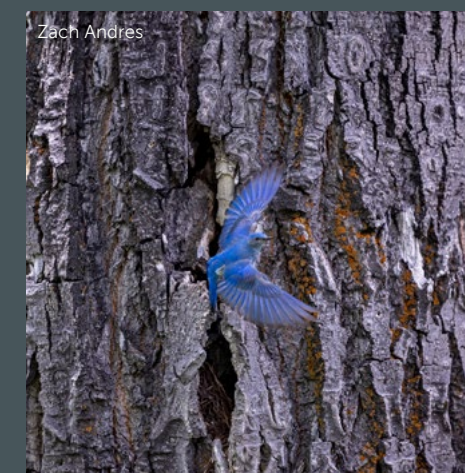
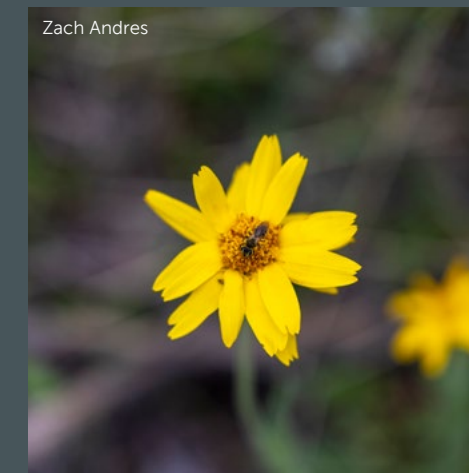
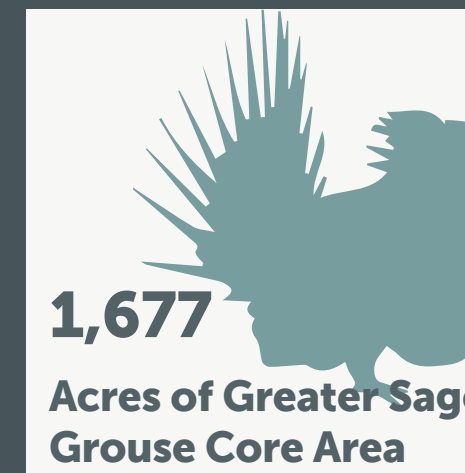
If you have not yet maximized your support of local conservation through Foundation 23, I encourage you to do so. Each year, any contribution you make through Foundation 23 to the Green River Valley Program of the JHLT will be matched. The impact of your donation extends beyond just the immediate preservation of land. It is an investment in the future of our community, environment, and way of life. With eight active projects totaling more than 3,900 acres of high-priority conservation lands, I hope you will consider supporting our unique conservation mission that ensures the protection of our region's ecological connectivity and agricultural heritage.

With Gratitude,

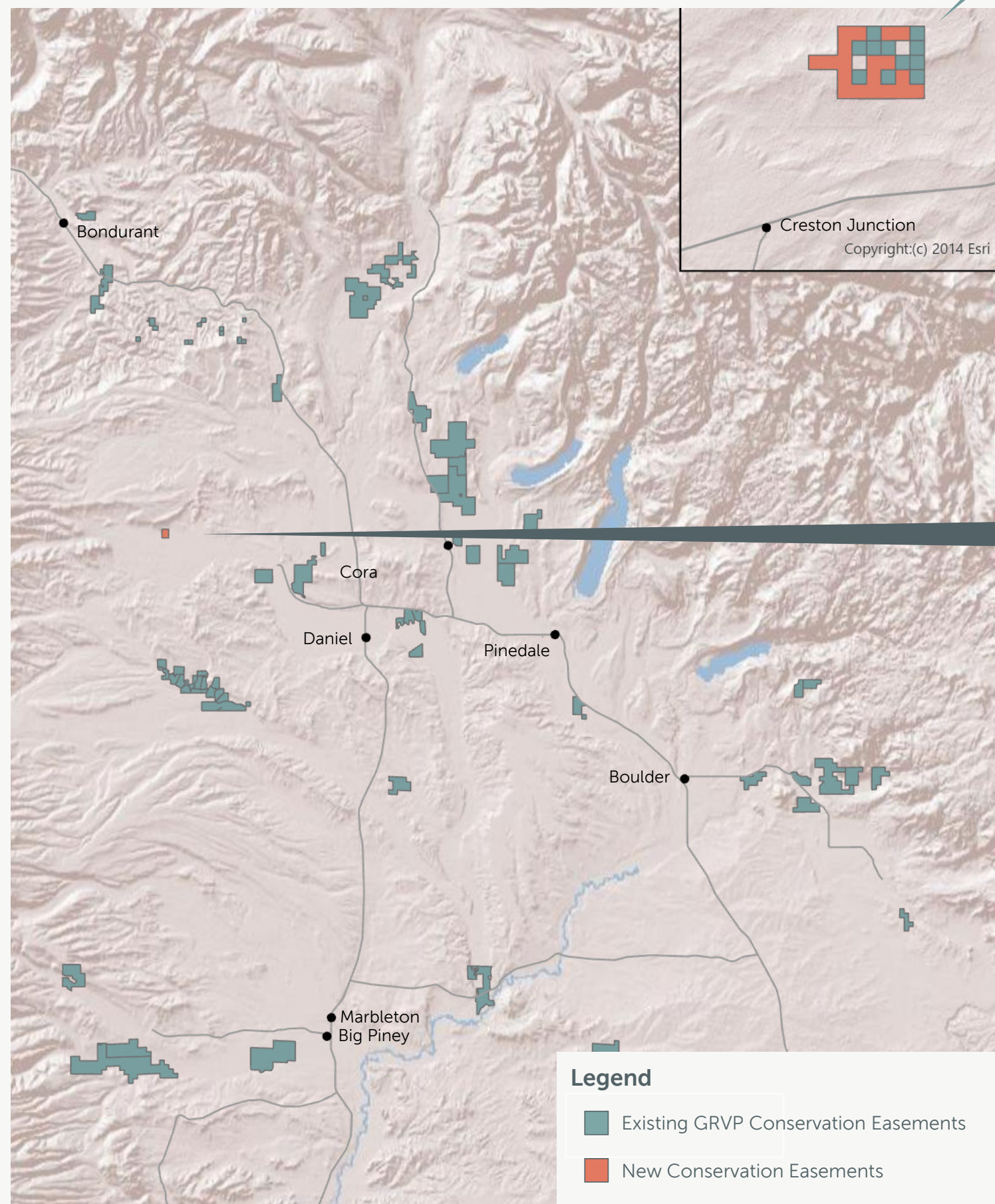
Kerry Gold
Green River Valley Program Director



By the Numbers



3,160 Acres Protected



Sundance Mesa II Conservation Easement

3,040 Acres | Protected by the Green River Valley Program of the JHLT since September 2023



The Green River Valley Program completed the Sundance Mesa II conservation easement in the Great Divide Basin. Situated in eastern Sweetwater County, this entirely donated conservation easement protects 3,040 acres of unique Red Desert terrain. Coupled with the Sundance Mesa I easement established in 2011 that protects 1,760 acres, Sundance Mesa II now brings the total protected area to an incredible 4,800 acres. This extensive network of land safeguards vital wildlife habitat, open spaces, and livestock grazing areas.

Landowners David Welborn and Ann Hunter-Welborn partnered with conservationist Frank Maurer to put this property under easement. Concerns about development and effects on wildlife, specifically related to sage-grouse, inspired the Welborns to conserve this parcel of land. David notes, "I have a desire and appreciation for the habitat, especially for sage-grouse." Maurer echoes this concern about development and the protection of wildlife habitat: "Our fellow creatures are being threatened by humans." This easement would not be possible without the landowners' generous donation.

Lead Creek Conservation Easement

120 Acres | Protected by the Green River Valley Program of the JHLT since November 2023

A new GRVP conservation easement now protects 120 acres of the Horse Creek corridor in Daniel, WY. Thanks to the generosity of landowners Chad and Gary Hayward, this important piece of land is now preserved for generations to come.

This newly protected parcel includes wet hay meadows, willow shrublands, upland grasslands, and a half mile of Lead Creek. The conservation of this land protects habitat that is critical for the seasonal movement of key wildlife, including mule deer, elk, moose, and pronghorn. Additionally, this parcel provides important wetland and riparian habitat for many migrant songbirds, migratory shorebirds, and predatory birds, notably sage grouse, great blue heron, sandhill cranes, and several raptor species.

The Hayward brothers were inspired to conserve their land by their family's strong roots in agriculture and ranching. Expressing concern about potential development in the area and its predicted impacts on habitat loss and wildlife, Chad Hayward states, "If we can keep it from happening on what we can control, that's what we want to do."



Planning for the Land

As families in the Green River Valley look toward the future, succession planning becomes a crucial and sometimes complex process. Effectively passing on land while maintaining its value and ensuring it remains in the family can be challenging. The process is a mix of financial, business, and personal elements that are often difficult to coordinate.

Sublette County continues to expand as the fastest-growing county in Wyoming, driving demand for land to install subdivisions and housing developments. According to a 2022 Department of Agriculture report, 95% of farms in Sublette County are family farms. These local ranchers and landowners are feeling real pressure from this demand. When a plan to pass down an operation to the next generation doesn't make logistical, financial, or emotional sense, landowners may end up selling their ranches. This weakens the Green River Valley's agricultural identity and removes land from the ecological landscape.

Conservation easements have emerged as a valuable tool to address these challenges and secure a family's legacy. The Green River Valley Program is actively working to provide landowners with succession planning resources to make land transition as successful as possible.

According to Elyse Caiazzo, who studied farm and ranch succession at the University of Montana, succession planning is not a single plan but a process involving several plans, each with varying degrees of complexity. Common challenges in both succession planning and conservation easements include financial pressures, family dynamics, and maintaining land use.

The financial implications of estate taxes can significantly erode the value of an inheritance, especially with large tracts of land. Without proper planning, heirs may face financial strain or be forced to sell portions of the land to cover these taxes. Succession planning often involves navigating complex family dynamics. Differing visions and expectations among family members

can lead to conflicts and hinder the smooth transfer of assets. Clear communication and shared goals are essential but can be difficult to achieve. Additionally, as properties change hands, there is a risk that they could be developed or used in ways that deviate from the family's original intentions.

While conservation easements cannot solve every succession planning puzzle, they can provide long-term security and peace of mind for many families. Conservation easements can significantly reduce the taxable value of the land, potentially easing the financial burden on heirs by lowering estate taxes.

Conservation easements can also help align family members' goals and foster a collective vision for preserving the land. Madeleine Murdock of Murdock Cattle Co. and owner of the Bar Bar E found conservation easements were helpful in this aspect. "The conservation easement has many protections written in we all have to agree on," she says. She also appreciated the easements' roles in preservation of land use on her ranch, saying, "Having some of the ranch protected by conservation easements is reassuring for me knowing it won't be sold for development particularly because Sublette County is the fastest-growing county." She went on to say,

"I think for ranches with purchased conservation easements, the biggest boon is it allows ranch families to stay in ranching." She has noticed younger generations are sometimes less interested in ranching and noted the general decline in ranchers.

Each regional program of the Jackson Hole Land Trust is developing ways to provide more support for families going through the succession planning process. This includes building lists of local legal and tax experts for landowners to consult, providing more succession education opportunities for staff, and planning focus groups across Northwest Wyoming to hear stakeholders' concerns and experiences.

Additionally, Land Trust staff have been participating in a four-year Land Transfer Navigator program provided by the American Farmland Trust. This program supplies tools and techniques to land trusts and land managers to help keep farms and ranches in agriculture when ownership changes.

Succession planning in the Green River Valley is vital for preserving both family legacies and the region's agricultural and ecological identity. Conservation easements, along with support from local programs, offer valuable tools to navigate this complex process. For more information, call our office at (307) 367-7007.

"Conservation easements can also help align family members' goals and foster a collective vision for preserving the land."



WyoView: Cowzilla

Since 2013, WyoView has united conservation and art to cultivate a deeper sense of place in Northwest Wyoming and raise awareness of the importance of open space protection. This summer, the GRVP partnered with local artist Mae Orm to capture the Upper Green's unique conservation values. Here is a look inside her process:

GRVP: What brought you to Pinedale, and what do you love most about the Green River Valley?

Mae Orm: I had relatives end up in Pinedale for oil field work about 14 years ago. My little family came out to visit the West and experience Yellowstone for the first time in 2013. I fell in love almost instantly with the ability to co-exist with nature on this level. The access to so much untouched, pristine land made my heart whole. I had to see if we could create a life outside the city of Louisville, KY. So we packed up everything that could fit in a U-HAUL and got my two young boys enrolled in grade school here. My oldest just obtained an associate degree from Central Wyoming College for Expedition Science; his joy comes from spending time in the mountains. My youngest will graduate from Pinedale High School in May 2025 and loves the life we have created here.

GRVP: Can you describe your art style and how it has evolved over time?

Orm: I have been asked many times what my style is called and I don't have a definite answer. There is a joke that I should name it after myself. Most pieces contain defined segments of color, sometimes geometric in shape. You will not find gray or brown colors in my pieces. While we can be very dry here and grays and browns can be seen in our landscapes, I like to challenge myself to not include them and work in other colors in their place.

My style has evolved slightly over time. My art, no matter when it was created, seems recognizable by most. I find joy that it seems to speak for itself and stand out among others.

GRVP: What inspired you to create this particular landscape painting, and what significance does the location or scenery hold for you?

Orm: The landscape painting "Cowzilla" includes so many pieces of Wyoming landscape that are commonly seen here in Pinedale. Ranches and homesteads are covering our area. Huge stretches of haying fields with a touch of mountains always seen in the far off distance. I love trying out different viewpoints in my work. In this image you are viewing things from the ground level, looking up and out.

GRVP: Could you walk us through your process when starting a new landscape painting, from initial concept to the final touches?

Orm: The most common starting point I create is a small watercolor and ink painting. This piece is usually loose and less defined than final pieces. This allows me to make decisions on color and layout. I then move to a larger canvas piece using either acrylics or oils. I will start by laying down the image in a thin wash of color. When I am ready for the final layer of color I will use the loose wash of color to predict the placement, intensity, and vibrancy of the final segments of color. I have found myself painting this layer from all angles, including upside down.

GRVP: How do you choose the colors and techniques you use in your landscapes, and what effect do you aim to achieve with them?

Orm: By eliminating the use of blacks, grays, and browns, which seem to be the easily seen majority

of colors in our landscapes, I challenge my eyes to see other colors. I like trying different techniques to create a sense of movement. I have used thin, flowing black "outlines" in some of my pieces that give the sense of flow and movement. In more recent pieces, I haven't included the linework and have allowed the direction, placement, and flow of geometric segments of color to carry the eyes around a piece and give a feeling of movement.

GRVP: What emotions or messages are you hoping to convey to viewers through this landscape painting, and how do you think it reflects your overall artistic vision?

Orm: I keep hearing people say, "Oh, I love the purple cow." I don't see it as a purple cow, I only see it as a cow. I love that people are so accepting and excited about the purple cow. It makes my heart happy.

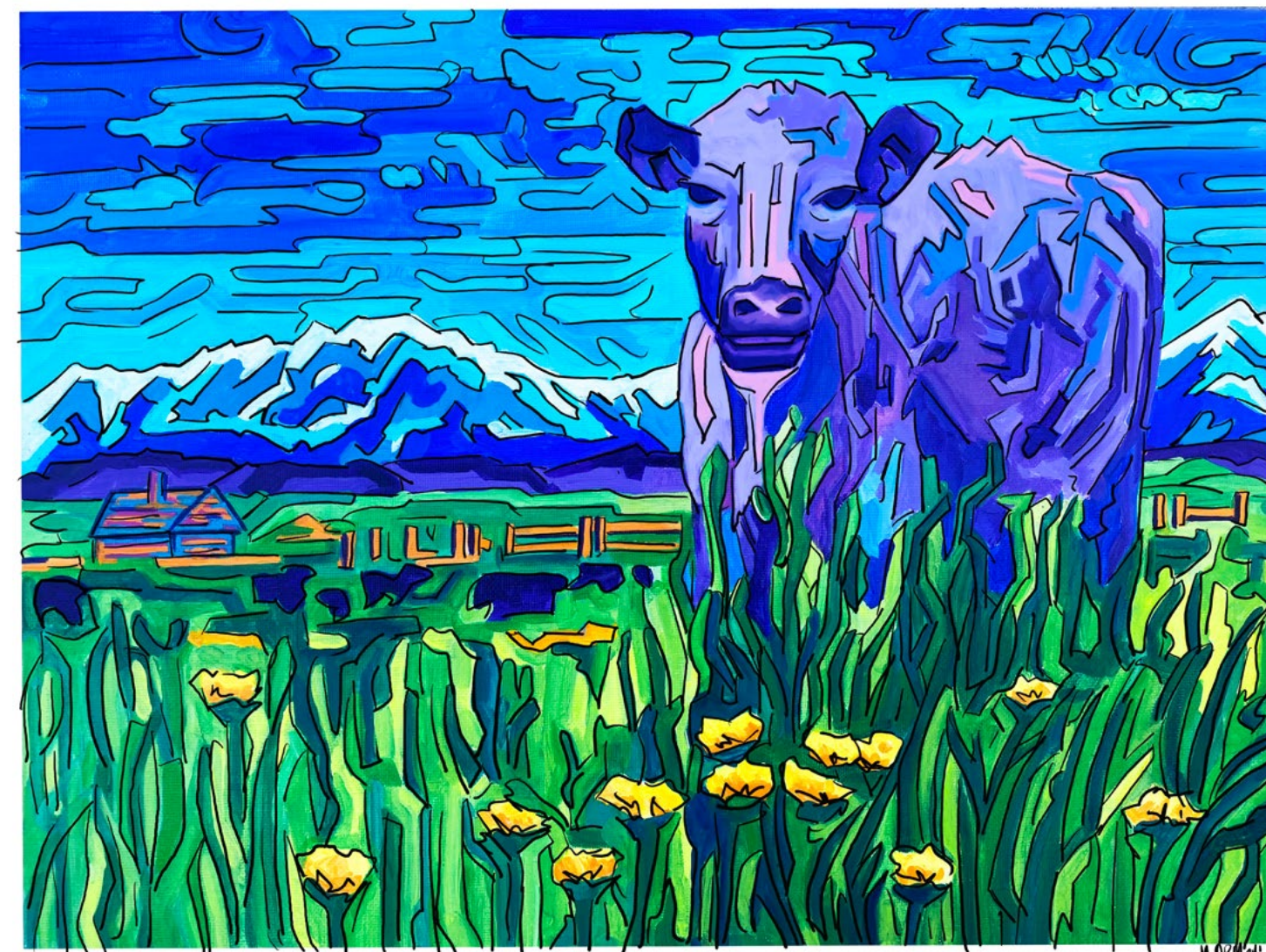
I hope the image conveys to the viewer not only the importance of the ranching history in our community but also the amazing lands we have for all of us to co-exist in. The hint of a homestead placed in the landscape is commonly seen all over our area. Whether the homestead is in use or left to deteriorate, they are a reminder of our past and

our future in Green River Valley.

GRVP: What are your hopes for the future of the Green River Valley?

Orm: I hope to see this area continue to recognize the importance of keeping our untouched, pristine landscapes just that, untouched and pristine.

"While we can be very dry here and grays and browns can be seen in our landscapes, I like to challenge myself to not include them and work in other colors in their place."



| Support the GRVP

Seeking a Truck

The Green River Valley Program is seeking a vehicle to support meetings with landowners, stewardship monitoring visits to conservation easements, and outreach tabling and events.

Do you have a four-wheel or all-wheel drive vehicle with low to medium mileage you'd like to donate? To discuss a tax-deductible donation, contact Kerry Gold at kerry@jhlandtrust.org.

Zach Andres



| Landowner Resource Hub

Community Resources

Do you own a conservation property? The Green River Valley Program strives to be a resource for protecting the conservation values of your property. To find out more about local partners and programs

to assist you in the stewardship of your property, scan the QR code with your smartphone or visit jhlandtrust.org/hub.



| GRVP Advisory Council

Leading Locally

The Green River Valley Program is thrilled to welcome a new member to our advisory council. Meet Troy Fieseler:



Troy spent his childhood on his family's ranch in Rock Springs and recreating throughout Sublette County with his father, who was an outfitter in Pinedale. He attended the University of Wyoming, where he obtained bachelor's degrees in business administration and wildlife biology and management. After graduating, he began his career with Wyoming Game and Fish in various technician positions before becoming a full-time habitat biologist in Kemmerer, focusing on the Southern Wyoming Range mule deer herd. In 2019, he moved to Pinedale to be the region's terrestrial habitat biologist, where he resides with his wife and two young sons. Troy works across all land ownerships with the cornerstone of his work being collaboration with private landowners. He is passionate about protecting wildlife habitats, movement corridors, and working lands for future generations. He considers land conservation the most important thing we can do in conservation.



Deborah Dawson



Jon Dawson



Mike Fenn



Faith Hamlin



Hadley Manning



Jim Roscoe

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