



| 2025 Green River Valley Program Newsletter



Open Lands

Grounded in Trust

As I look out across the hayfields turning gold in the late summer sun, I’m reminded of why I do this work. Every conserved acre, every rancher who feels confident their land will remain whole, every streambank left wild for future generations—it all comes back to people like you.

Thanks to your support, this has been a year to be proud of. The Green River Valley Program (GRVP) closed two new conservation easements, protecting 480 acres of working lands and vital wildlife habitat. These projects didn’t just protect land, they honored family legacies, secured migration corridors, and supported the rural economies that make our region strong.

The GRVP has also deepened partnerships with local landowners, conservation groups, and community organizations. These collaborations are at the heart of conservation that’s rooted in local knowledge, grounded in trust, and built to last.

Looking ahead, there’s more work to be done. As pressures on land and water increase, so

does the need for thoughtful, voluntary conservation.

With your continued help, the GRVP will keep advancing solutions that respect both the landscape and the people who live closest to it.

Thank you for being part of this mission. Your belief in conservation gives me strength—and hope.

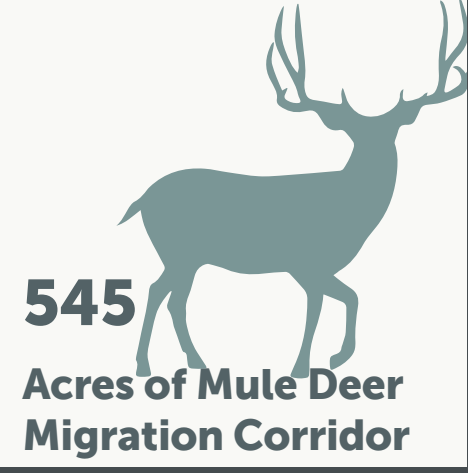
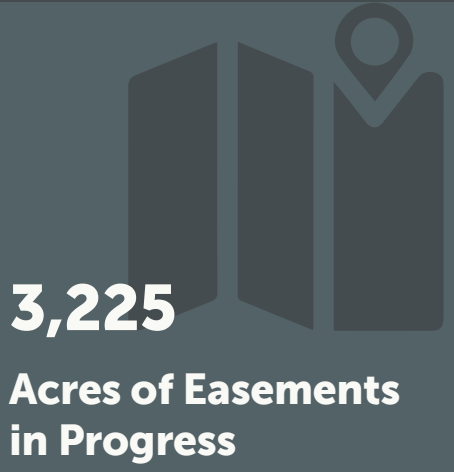
With Gratitude,

Kerry (Gold) Schultz
Green River Valley Program Director

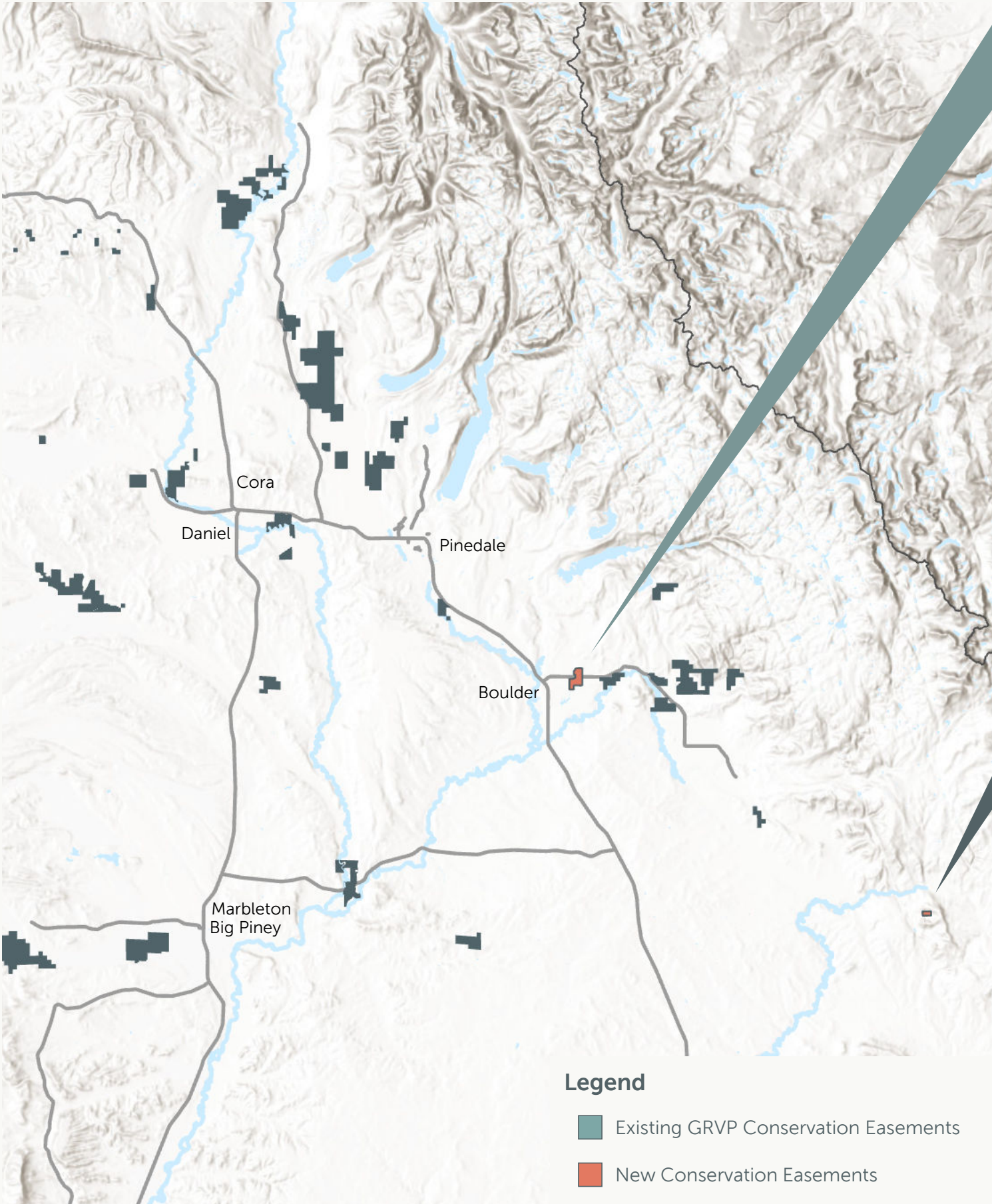
P.S. I got hitched—note the name change!



By the Numbers



480 Acres Protected



Boulder Draw Conservation Easement

400 Acres | Protected by the Green River Valley Program of the JHLT since December 2024



The Boulder Draw Conservation Easement protects family ranchlands, open spaces, and critical wildlife habitat, while expanding a network of conserved lands in Boulder and along the Wind River Front.

Located within the Daniel Sage-Grouse Core Area, the property features sagebrush uplands, irrigated pastures, riparian vegetation, and wet meadows. These diverse habitats support a wide array of wildlife, including elk, mule deer, and moose, while offering crucial brood-rearing and nesting grounds for sandhill cranes and long-billed curlews—migratory wetland birds listed as Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Raptors such as Swainson’s hawks, golden eagles, and red-tailed hawks also hunt in the open spaces, which also provide habitat for foxes, coyotes, and badgers.

Boulder Draw safeguards the region’s important ranching legacy and will keep its working lands in the hands of the ranching family. As the landowner shared, “It will help maintain the beauty, productivity, and wildlife haven that makes the Boulder Valley so special.”

The Cutoff Conservation Easement

80 Acres | Protected by the Green River Valley Program of the JHLT since December 2024

The Cutoff Conservation Easement now protects crucial wildlife habitat near Boulder. Generously donated by Mark Headley and Christina Pehl, the easement conserves a key section of the Sublette Mule Deer Migration Corridor and the main artery of the Red Desert to Hoback route—the longest known ungulate migration in the continental United States.

Located along the historic Lander Cutoff Road, this Bureau of Land Management inholding features aspen groves, wet meadows, and sagebrush uplands. These habitats support seasonal movement for mule deer, elk, moose, and pronghorn, and provide important sage-grouse brood-rearing habitat within the Greater South Pass Sage-Grouse Core Area.

The landowners were motivated by a deep appreciation for the land and the role it plays in sustaining Wyoming’s wildlife. “Protecting critical migration routes and rest stops for animals is a particularly high priority for us,” said Headley. This easement safeguards a diverse stretch of habitat, helping maintain connectivity across the region and reducing the risk of fragmentation and development.



The Western Toad

If you walk quietly along a wet meadow or high-elevation pond in western Wyoming, you might spot one of the region's more elusive residents: the western toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*). Also called the Boreal toad and often overlooked, these small, slow-moving amphibians play an outsized role in our mountain ecosystems—and they are quietly disappearing from parts of their native range.

While a rare sight, you can identify an adult western toad by the white stripe down its back and the absence of a raised crest on its head. They can be found in a variety of habitats across Sublette County, including forest edges, sagebrush flats, and especially the lush wet meadows and ponds created by snowmelt. The species requires specific habitats for breeding, summer, and winter. In the spring and early summer, they gather to breed in shallow water, laying long strands of eggs that hatch into tadpoles within days. But their story doesn't end at the pond's edge.

Unlike many amphibians that stay near water, western toads migrate overland to higher-elevation foraging areas after breeding—sometimes traveling more than a mile away. They spend most of the year in cooler, moist upland areas, hiding under logs and in rodent burrows. These wide-ranging seasonal movements mean they depend on large, intact landscapes that connect wetland and upland habitats.

Many of the toad's preferred habitats are found on working ranches and large private properties—places where sagebrush hills meet wet meadows and forested draws. When landowners partner with

land trusts to place conservation easements on their property, they're doing more than protecting scenic views and family ranching traditions. They're also protecting crucial corridors for species like the western toad, classified as a Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Conservation easements prevent subdivision

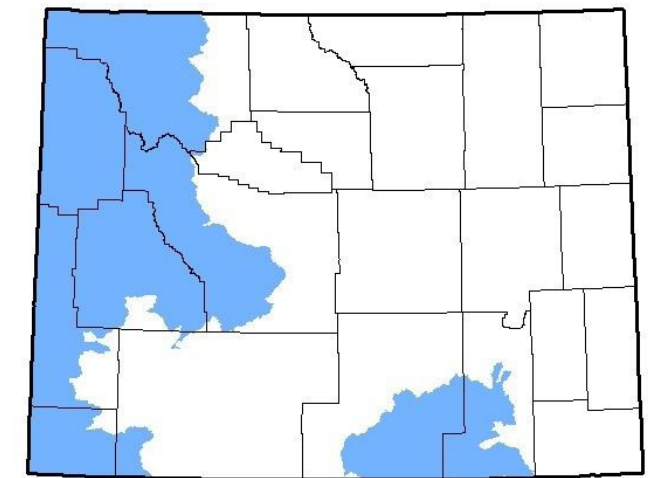
and intensive development, keeping migratory pathways open and reducing habitat fragmentation. They also help maintain the water resources—streams, springs, and ephemeral ponds—that toads rely on for breeding. The Green River Valley Program protects more than 12,400 acres of designated wetlands, supporting habitats that the western toads need.

In addition to habitat loss, western toads are facing significant declines due to chytrid fungus, a type of microscopic fungus that infects amphibians like frogs, toads, and salamanders. It lives in water and spreads through spores. When it infects an amphibian's skin, it interferes with how the animal breathes and absorbs water through its skin, which can make the animal very sick or even cause death. It has been a major cause of population decline among amphibians around the world. Maintaining healthy watersheds can provide more habitat, allowing toads to spread out and reducing their risk of infection. Across Wyoming, the Wyoming Game & Fish Department and the United States Forest Service have begun using in-stream structures that mimic beaver dams to restore breeding ponds for critical toad populations declining

due to the loss of breeding habitat.

Western toads may not be flashy or famous, but they're sensitive indicators of ecosystem health. Every toad you spot is proof the land is thriving—not just for agriculture, but for wildlife too. With your support, we can continue protecting the landscapes these quiet travelers call home.

Wyoming Native Range



Zach Andres

Many of the toad's preferred habitats are found on working ranches and large private properties—places where sagebrush hills meet wet meadows and forested draws.



Easements as Legacy

Before dawn, the ranch is quiet except for the low murmur of cattle and the sound of wind moving through the grass. A lone light glows in the kitchen window where coffee is brewing and another long day is about to begin. For many ranching families in Wyoming, this rhythm is more than a way to make a living; it is a connection to generations who worked the same soil, tended the same pastures, and cared for the same herds. The land is more than an asset—it is a legacy.

That vision, however, is not always easy to achieve. In today's economic climate, passing a working ranch from one generation to the next can be a complicated challenge. Rising property values drive up estate taxes. Younger generations may have different career paths or live far from home. Meanwhile, the day-to-day costs of operating a ranch—from feed and equipment to labor and fuel—continue to climb. Without a plan, families can find themselves facing hard decisions about selling land, reducing operations, or splitting up property.

This is where financial planning and conservation easements can work together to protect both the land and the family's future. Financial planning services help families create a clear, step-by-step strategy for transferring ownership of both land and operations. The process usually begins with a full review of assets and obligations: land, livestock, debt, savings, and income sources. Advisors also take the time to understand the family's goals, whether that means keeping the ranch under a single owner, dividing it among siblings, or supporting an heir who is ready to take over management.

From there, the advisor may recommend a variety of approaches. Some families choose to gift portions of the land over time to gradually shift ownership. Others establish trusts to protect assets and outline exactly how they should be managed. In some cases, selling shares of the operation to the next generation over several years allows for a smoother financial transition. These plans are not just about the numbers; they often require families to have honest conversations about roles, responsibilities, and expectations. Who will make day-to-day decisions? How will non-operating siblings be treated fairly? What happens if an heir changes course? Addressing these questions early can prevent conflict and provide everyone with clarity.

Financial advisors frequently work alongside estate attorneys and accountants to ensure the entire plan fits together. Wills, tax strategies, and retirement income must all align so the transition is not only financially sound but also legally secure. That coordination helps make the eventual handoff as smooth as possible, reducing the risk of legal disputes or unexpected tax burdens.

Conservation easements can be a valuable part of this process. Placing an easement on a property can lower its appraised value, which can, in turn, significantly reduce estate taxes. For some families, this reduction can mean the difference between keeping the ranch intact and having to sell part of it to cover tax obligations. Beyond easing estate taxes, easements may provide financial benefits in the form of income tax deductions or direct payments from a purchasing entity, such as a land trust. These funds can help landowners pay down debt, support retirement, or reinvest in infrastructure such as fencing, water systems, or equipment.

Perhaps most importantly, conservation easements protect the land itself. By restricting subdivision or development, they ensure that the ranch remains open and productive. For many ranchers, knowing that their stewardship values will continue to guide the property long after they are gone is the greatest reward. The combination of financial planning and conservation tools makes it possible to meet both practical and personal goals.

When financial advisors and land trusts work together, they can offer a complete approach to succession planning, one that balances the economic realities of ranching with the deep personal connection families have to the land.

In Northwest Wyoming, this collaboration has already helped many families keep their ranches in operation while protecting open space, wildlife habitat, and scenic views.

As the sun sets over a pasture lined with grazing cattle, a rancher might take a quiet moment to imagine the years ahead. With careful planning, honest conversations, and the right partners, the land will remain in the hands of the people who know it best, and the light in that kitchen window will keep glowing for generations to come.

This is where financial planning and conservation easements can work together to protect both the land and the family's future.



Tools for Landowners

The Green River Valley Resource Hub was created to connect landowners with the tools, knowledge, and support needed to care for the land. Whether you're safeguarding wildlife habitat, managing working lands, or simply learning more about your property's history, the GRVP Resource Hub brings everything together in one place.

Its resources span a wide range of stewardship topics, including:

Weed and Pest Control: Mitigate invasive and non-native species

Wildfire Mitigation: Prepare your property, reduce risk, and recover after fire

Forestry: Maintain healthy forests and manage pests or disease

Habitat Enhancement: Restore wetlands, grasslands, and other critical areas

Water Resources: Improve water quality, conserve supplies, and protect aquatic habitat

Rangeland Management: Support sustainable grazing and healthy rangelands

Gardening, Horticulture, and Clean Energy: Grow responsibly and explore renewable energy options

Wildlife-Friendly Fencing: Design and maintain fences that keep livestock in and wildlife moving

Livestock–Wildlife Conflict Mitigation: Reduce conflicts and protect both herds and habitat

Community Stewardship, Science, and Education: Get involved, learn, and share knowledge with neighbors

Cultural Heritage and Archaeology: Discover and protect the history beneath your feet

Whether you own a few acres or a full working ranch, the Resource Hub makes it easier to find practical guidance, funding opportunities, and local experts who can help you put conservation into action. Together, we can protect the Green River Valley's open spaces, wildlife, and cultural heritage for generations to come.

Explore resources at jhlandtrust.org/hub or contact our stewardship staff.



Leading Locally



Deborah Dawson



Jon Dawson



Troy Fieseler



Faith Hamlin



Hadley Manning



Jim Roscoe

Truck Hunt

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 Schultz at kerry@jhlandtrust.org.



Alexandra Munger



Arnie Brokling

Explore

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Michael Bye



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