



**Lewis and Clark County
Community Development and Planning**

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Helena, MT 59623
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Open Lands Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) Regular Public Meeting Agenda

**Tuesday, November 1, 2016, 5:30 pm
Room 226, City/County Building, 316 N Park Ave, Helena**

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. New business
 - Project Information Spreadsheet Review
 - Shoco Ranch Conservation Easement
4. Public comment on any matter within the scope of the CAC that is not on the agenda.

To participate via telephone or video call:

Please call the Conference phone at 447-8314

Or email Matt at mheimel@lccountymt.gov for directions to video conference.



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To: Open Lands Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)
From: Matt Heimel, Special Districts Planner
Date: 10/27/16
Re: Shoco Ranch Conservation Easement Project

GENERAL INFORMATION

DATE OF APPLICATION: 1/4/16 (Level 1), 7/26/16 (Level 2), 9/27/16 (Amended Level 2)

MEETING DATES: 1/21/16 (Level one pre-application); 8/22/16 (Site visit); 9/6/16 (Citizens Advisory Committee regular public meeting, first meeting on project); 10/4/16 (Citizens Advisory Committee regular public meeting, second meeting on project); 10/13/16 (County Commission regular public meeting); 11/1/16 (Citizens Advisory Committee regular public meeting)

PROPERTY OWNER: Sally Shortridge, 3506 Secondary Hwy 435, P.O. Box 333, Augusta, MT, 59410

SPONSOR ORGANIZATION: The Montana Land Reliance, 324 Fuller Ave., P.O. Box 355, Helena, MT, 59624

PROPERTY LEGAL LOCATION:

- Parcel I:
 - Township 20 North, Range 7 West, P.M.M., Lewis and Clark County, Montana
 - Section 34: SE1/4
 - Section 35: All, LESS SE1/4 south of County Road and LESS NW1/4 north of County Road, and LESS a 1.77 acre tract in the NE1/4NE1/4
- Parcel II:
 - Township 20 North, Range 7 West, P.M.M., Lewis and Clark County, Montana
 - Section 33: Parcel A of Certificate of Survey No. 3085841 located in the N1/2S1/2

GENERAL LOCATION: The property is west of and partly adjacent to Secondary Hwy 435 and south of Smith Creek Rd, and is bisected by Smith Creek flowing west to east.

GENERAL PROJECT DETAILS

A) PROPOSAL

In an email to staff on October 27, 2016, the Sponsor indicated that approximately \$8,000 in additional funding has been secured, and the funding requested from the County has been reduced to approximately **\$775,000**. Finalization of the funding sources was still in progress, and the Sponsor anticipated having more details available at the November 1, 2016 CAC meeting. Additional funding sources may include the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Vital Ground Foundation.

On September 27, 2016, the sponsoring organization submitted an amendment to the level two application to update the funding request. Funding for the conservation easement of \$783,000 was requested from the County (90% of the appraised value, with the addition of project related costs), proposed to be applied to a 836 acre conservation easement on the property. Details of the updated requests are included in the attached amended application document.

The original level 2 application requested \$810,000.00 (100% of the appraised value of the conservation easement) from the County Open Space Bond Fund.

C) PRESENT LAND USE

The property is currently utilized for livestock grazing and management, agricultural land stewardship, irrigated hay/grass/alfalfa meadows, and offers private hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, cabin lodging, and recreation reservations.

D) ADJACENT LAND USE

North: Rangeland

East: Agricultural

South: Rangeland

West: Rangeland

PROJECT STATUS

On October 13, 2016, at a regularly scheduled and notice meeting of the Board of County Commissioners, the Commission was presented with details of the proposed conservation easement from staff and sponsors. Public comments in support of the project were also taken as part of the agenda item. The Commission unanimously voted approval of a motion to return the project to the CAC, so that the Sponsor could have more time to seek out additional funding sources. The Commission also stated its intention to have the CAC vote on a recommendation that is specific to the recommended funding approval amount, so that a public comment period could be opened with a complete proposal, including newly updated funding request and sources.

COMMITTEE OPTIONS

After the project is reviewed according to the project evaluation criteria in the Open Lands Program Guide, the CAC may vote on a motion to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners that the Shoco Ranch Conservation Easement be processed one of four ways, outlined below:

- A) Recommendation in favor of project approval with full requested funding, contingent upon County legal staff's review to confirm the application's compliance with due diligence requirements;
- B) Recommendation in favor of project approval with partial requested funding, contingent upon County legal staff's review to confirm the application's compliance with due diligence requirements;
- C) Recommendation in favor of project approval if the Project Sponsor secures additional agency funding sources, contingent upon County legal staff's review to confirm the application's compliance with due diligence requirements;
- D) Recommendation against project approval.

ATTACHMENTS

- Shoco Ranch CE Level 2 Application, amended application, project maps, and public comments

SHOCO RANCH

Lewis and Clark County Open Lands Program Level Two Application

Landowner and Agency Identification

Landowner:

Shoco Ranch
Sally Shortridge
P.O. Box 333
Augusta, MT 59410
406-562-3553 (Ranch)
406-235-0176 (Cell)

Sponsoring Organization:

The Montana Land Reliance
324 Fuller Avenue
P.O. Box 355
Helena, MT 59624
406-443-7027

General Description of the Property:

- a. Size of the property – total acreage and amounts by sub-ownership categories (i.e., deeded, leased, permitted public land, etc.).

The Shoco Ranch consists of 836 acres and is solely owned by Sally Shortridge. The ranch is in two parcels (one being 160 acres and one being approximately 677 acres) that are not contiguous but within ¼ mile of each other. Shortridge holds the leases on two adjacent parcels of State of Montana Trust lands (State Lands) that are not included in this purchase proposal.

- b. Size of the area to be included in the conservation easement or land purchase – total acreage and percentage of deeded land.

The entire (100%) Shoco Ranch property (836 deeded acres) is being included in this application for the purchase of a Deed of Conservation Easement (Easement).

- c. Permitted home sites – identify any existing home sites and future home sites that will be permitted in the conservation easement.

There are two residential building envelopes within the Easement boundaries. Existing Building Envelope #1, as depicted in Exhibit F of the Easement that is attached to this application as Appendix XII, is located on the home/headquarters parcel (677-acre piece), and encompasses a residence, 1908 barn, two shops, and various agricultural structures. One additional residence will be permitted within Existing Building Envelope #1 which consists of approximately 42 acres. Also on the home/headquarters parcel are two primitive cabins (no utilities) that are located outside of the 42-acre building envelope. These two cabins must remain primitive in nature and cannot be expanded in size or upgraded for use as full-time, permanent residences.

Existing Building Envelope #2, as depicted in the Easement (Appendix XII), consists of 9.5 acres and contains one residence (an apartment within the shop) and one cabin. One additional residence will be permitted within this envelope. The cabin within this building envelope does have electricity and an associated well; however, cannot be expanded in size or upgraded for use as a full-time, permanent residence.

- d. **Water/Mineral Rights** – identify any other rights appurtenant to the property and whether they will remain with the property.

There are 150 acre-feet of Florence Canal and Elk and Smith creek water rights associated with Shoco Ranch and the landowner intends that they remain with the property. See Appendix VIII for additional water rights information.

The mineral rights have been severed from the Shoco Ranch by previous owners. A Mineral Remoteness Report is attached to this application as Appendix VII. This report found that surface mining on the property “is so remote as to be negligible” in accordance with Treasury Regulations. Further the mineral guarantee (also included in Appendix VII) reflects various oil and gas leases – all of which have expired per the terms of the leases.

- e. **Hazardous materials** – confirm that no hazardous materials, as defined by the federal government, are known or believed to be present on the property both above and below ground. If the land is contaminated, the contamination has been identified and a description is included as to how the material can be removed from the property and the site reclaimed.

There are no hazardous materials known or believed to be present on the property to the best of the fourth generation landowner and sponsor’s knowledge. An Environmental Report was prepared and is attached to this application as Appendix IV.

- f. **Other Conservation Easements and Public Lands** – adjacent or nearby existing or proposed conservation easements and/or public land that would enhance the purpose of this application.

The Shoco Ranch is located approximately 4 miles southwest of the town of Augusta, in the north-central portion of Lewis and Clark County. The Easement will protect 836 acres intersected by Smith Creek and bordered on three sides by State Lands. The 160-acre parcel of the property is bordered along its entire southern boundary by a block of contiguous State Lands that includes approximately 7,750 acres. This same block of State Lands borders most of the southern portion of the 677-acre parcel as well. The eastern boundary of the 677-acre parcel is bordered by a 158-acre piece of State Lands. Directly north of the Shoco Ranch and across Smith Creek Road lays a block of contiguous property comprised of roughly 13,420 acres (7,160 acres of State Lands; a 4,721-acre property that borders Nilan Reservoir that is protected by a conservation easement; and approximately 1,539 privately owned acres that are used for grazing). The protection of the Shoco Ranch, in association with the State Lands and other protected property, provide a wildlife corridor and

valuable riparian areas in the Smith Creek drainage. There are six (6) current public access points to the State Lands that border the Shoco Ranch and numerous other public access points to these same lands within 2.5 to 3 miles of the property. The general public can access Smith Creek via three points on the Shoco Ranch boundary via the high water mark. Additionally, there is another access point on the bridge that lies approximately a ½ mile west of the Shoco Ranch's border on Smith Creek Road. Please see Appendix IX, Public Access Points Map.

- g. **Commercial Activities** – identify and describe any existing and/or proposed commercial activities occurring on the property.

Current commercial activity on the Shoco Ranch include upland bird hunting, fishing, deer hunting, farming, and cattle ranching. Shoco Ranch offers pheasant and chukar hunts to clients from September thru March. Each fall, Shoco Ranch offers its clients white-tailed deer hunts along with stays at the cabins on the ranch.

Funding: Describe the general budget of the project and any of the following that apply.

- o What funding is requested from the County and how will they be applied.

This request is for the purchase of the Easement for \$810,000.00 (100% of the appraised value of the conservation easement). This value has been established by a qualified appraisal obtained for the Shoco Ranch (see Appendix V).

- o Will the County's funds be matched through donation of land value and/or other funding sources? If so, what amounts have been approved or requested, or are pending approval?

The landowner and sponsoring organization are asking for the total purchase price for this Easement. Project costs related to the completion of the Easement (environmental assessment, appraisal, title insurance, resource (baseline) documentation report, mineral remoteness report, deed preparation, legal review, and closing and recording fees) in the amount of approximately \$20,000 will be covered by the landowner and the sponsoring organization.

- o If applicable, describe the total project costs, including transaction costs and stewardship fees.

In addition to the project costs noted above (\$20,000), the landowner has agreed to make a donation to MLR's "Land Protection Fund" for the stewardship and monitoring of the Easement in the future. Total costs, including this donation, will be approximately \$40,000.

Conserve Working Farms and Ranches: Describe the value of the property in terms of continuing or restoring the historic land use, and identify any of the following characteristics that apply.

Shoco Ranch is currently owned and operated by Sally Shortridge. Sally is the fourth generation of females to operate and live on the ranch. She is the great-granddaughter

of the original settlers to take the reins of the ranch. The Shoco Ranch has significant farm and ranching values today, as it has for over 100 years. There are approximately 250 acres available for crop production, and much of the remainder is high quality native range – all of which is available for livestock grazing. This ranch has been operated with many sustainable and innovative practices. Rotational grazing of livestock and utilizing biological bugs for weed abatement to name just a few. Current stewardship and operational practices maintain a sustainable working family ranch with financial contributions to the local economy. Sally Shortridge sees the Easement as a way to sustain the operation for generations to come, foregoing subdivision and development. The current stewardship practices make the agricultural ranch sustainable by protecting the health of the land and the environment.

- Does the property contain “prime, unique, statewide, or locally important” agricultural soils, as defined by NRCS?

Yes, NRCS lists 400 acres of the Shoco Ranch as qualifying prime soils. Please see Appendix IX, Soils Designation Map, for complete soils classifications.

- Is the property contiguous with other working lands?

Yes. The Tee Bar Ranch Company has lands to the north and west of the larger parcel of the Shoco Ranch which are utilized for livestock grazing and connect the Shoco Ranch to the large block of State Lands (also utilized for grazing). The Parsons’ property and lands owned by Haystack, LLC (LF Ranch) have deeded contiguous livestock grazing operations to the 160-acre parcel of Shoco Ranch. The Blenton Ranch Co., property that is located approximately 2 miles north of Shoco Ranch is protected by a conservation easement at the head of the drainage near Nilan Reservoir.

- Is this property currently a working farm or ranch?

Yes. The Shoco Ranch has been a working ranch along Smith Creek for nearly 100 years (four generations of the Shortridge family have worked the ranch). There is summer pasture for 250 head of cattle and 20 horses. There is approximately 250 acres of hay meadows which are leveled with gravity fed gated-pipe irrigation. The ranch boasts yields of 4.5 ton of grass/alfalfa on average per irrigated acre. Shoco Ranch employs four seasonal workers improving the local economy.

- Is there an existing farm or ranch management plan in place?

The landowner has developed a “Total Ranch Plan”. This plan includes a Mob Grazing Plan which allows ample recovery time by rotation of paddocks. This method allows for short duration, high intensity grazing which improves pasture while increasing stocking rate. This grazing method of dividing meadows into long strips secured by electric and permanent fences utilizes daily moves, which monitor the degree and focus on animal performance. The hay meadows are leveled and are irrigated with gravity fed, gated-pipe irrigation. The Weed

Control Plan utilizes chemicals which discourage weed invasion. Shoco Ranch participates in the innovative practice of releasing Flea Beetles for leafy spurge destruction and *Cyphocleonus achates* for biological control of knapweed. Also developed in the "Total Ranch Plan" is the Streambank Protection Plan. This waterway protection plan ensures streambank stabilization and provides for fenced off riparian and wetland protection.

Conserve Working Forests: Describe the value of the property in terms of protecting or improving forest uses, and identify any of the following characteristics that apply.

The Shoco Ranch provides high quality bottomland agricultural meadows and a rich and diverse riparian community along Smith Creek.

- Is the property located within the urban/wildland interface?

No.

- Is the location deemed to be an area of high risk for wildlife?

No. Most of the property is rated at 'low risk' for fuel hazards due to the prevalence of riparian habitat and hay ground.

- Is there a current forest management plan?

No. There is not a forest management plan due to the minimal amount of forest lands on this property.

- Is the property, or a portion of it, classified as forest land/commercial timber for tax purposes?

No.

- Is the forest being actively managed for current or future timber harvest?

No.

Protect Habitat for Fish and Wildlife: Describe the value of the property as fish and wildlife habitat and include any of the following that apply.

The Shoco Ranch provides high quality fish and wildlife habitat throughout and lies within a US Fish and Wildlife Service's national priority conservation region along the Rocky Mountain Front. One of the primary conservation attractions to the Shoco Ranch is its repeated use as a spring calving grounds for elk. Up to 150 elk cows have been seen in the bottomlands with the calves. Smith Creek is used as an important travel corridor for grizzly bear attracted to the area as well as a tremendous fishery producing prized wild brown, rainbow, and cutthroat trout. This creek functions as an important thermal refuge for the trout which can be exposed to severe dewatering. It provides good summer flows and cool water temperatures all summer long as it conveys irrigation

water from Nilan Reservoir (Dave Yerck, MTFWP Wildlife Biologist). This associated riparian area is important for nesting waterfowl, raptors, and migratory songbirds. The native grass range on the terrace provides good grass for elk and many of the other important species throughout the year.

- Does the property contain significant wildlife habitat?

Yes. The ranch provides important wildlife habitat for many species, including white-tailed deer, elk, grizzly bear, lynx, mountain lion, beaver, rainbow and brown trout, and many species of birds including bald eagles and other raptors (Laura Conway, USFS, Lewis and Clark National Forest, Wildlife Biologist).

The majority of the property is identified as a Class 2 Crucial Wildlife Habitat rank (2nd highest) as identified by MTFWP (CAPS system). Crucial Habitat rank depicts relatively ranked areas containing the resources, including food, water, cover, shelter, and "important wildlife corridors," that are necessary for the survival and reproduction of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife and to prevent unacceptable declines, or facilitate future recovery of wildlife populations, or are important ecological systems with high biological diversity value. See the CAPS link below for further information: <http://fwp.mt.gov/gis/maps/caps> (Brent Lonner, MTFWP, Wildlife Biologist)

- Is there a diversity of habitat for wildlife or fish on the property?

Yes. This property contains native grasslands, wetlands, ponds, creeks, and riparian areas. This Easement will support conservation investments complementing riparian areas. It will create a valuable corridor with a protected buffer for wildlife and fisheries. Due to the natural watercourse within the Easement, additional consideration for wildlife diversity should be recognized.

Specific to wildlife, habitat diversity on the property is loosely and perhaps a bit vaguely defined as fair. Having the riparian habitat that runs through a good portion of the property does add value to the area due to the significance of this sort of habitat to a large number of species. The upland habitat types are important areas for seasonal and/or year-round use by big game such as white-tailed and mule deer, elk, and antelope. The riparian areas in this location also accommodate these species along with a larger diversity of wildlife to include grizzly bear. Maintaining intact and unfragmented riparian habitat (and immediately surrounding habitat) is important for wildlife in this and many other locations. This area is within the Rocky Mountain Front Terrestrial Focal Areas for the Montana State Wildlife Action Plan - Tier I, Other Priority: Greatest conservation need. These areas are defined as having a clear obligation to use resources to implement conservation actions that provide direct benefit to these areas. These areas were selected by MTFWP Regions as high priority. More information can be found at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/fwpDoc.html?id=70173> (Brent Lonner, MTFWP Wildlife Biologist)

- Has the property been identified as an area critical to the lifecycle of some wildlife species (summer or winter range, migration corridors, spawning habitat, etc.)?

Yes. This property contains the migration trails for the grizzly bear population and is a primary elk birthing and calving area. Smith Creek, located on the property, is a prime spawning fishery for brown and cutthroat trout. US Forest Service (USFS) biologist Laura Conway has identified 30 different species in this area, some of which are Threatened and Endangered Species.

This property falls primarily within a mountain/foothill habitat type which is important to both summer and wintering species in this area. Large game readily use this habitat type for winter range. Smaller wildlife (game and nongame) species readily use these habitat types both during the summer and winter periods.

Riparian bottoms such as Smith Creek runs through the property act as important wildlife corridors during portions of the year. Keeping these areas as intact as possible is important to limit interruptions related to corridors such as this. Again, see the website below for further details on how critical this area is related to this. <http://fwp.mt.gov/gis/maps/caps/> (Brent Lonner, MTFWP, Wildlife Biologist)

- Is there habitat for Threatened and Endangered, or Sensitive species of wildlife or fish?

Yes. Laura Conway, biologist for USFS – Lewis and Clark National Forest has identified two species under “Threatened & Endangered” listing -- grizzly bear and Canada lynx (designated Critical Habitat). Under the “Sensitive Species” there are 30 identified species, including but not limited to, bald eagle, harlequin duck, grey wolf, and Western toad. The Montana Natural Heritage Program identifies 11 Species of Concern and 1 Special Status Species for the township and range where the Shoco Ranch is located. Both of these lists are provided at the end of this application.

Smith Creek provides spawning habitat for the westslope cutthroat trout and Western pearl shell clams within the waterway corridor.

The property contains habitat that may overlap with a multitude of wildlife species that are either defined as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) or perhaps currently federally listed as Threatened or Endangered. See the CAPS link below to look for further information related to this. <http://fwp.mt.gov/gis/maps/caps/> State Wildlife Action Plan > State Wildlife Action Plan Terrestrial > Species of Greatest Conservation Need > SGCN Range Maps > (Brent Lonner, MTFWP Wildlife Biologist)

- Are there streams or rivers with high habitat ratings from MTFWP?

Yes.

- Is there intact native riparian habitat?

Yes. More than 4 miles of waterways run through the property with extensive areas of riparian habitat.

Provide Opportunities for Outdoor Recreation: Describe the value of the property for outdoor recreation, and identify any of the following that apply.

By protecting the Shoco Ranch from subdivision and commercial development with this Easement a wildlife corridor and riparian areas will be maintained. The Shoco Ranch Easement will protect approximately 836 acres almost entirely bisected by Smith Creek. When coupled with the immediately contiguous State Lands, it will create a southern block in the neighborhood of 7,750 acres. Additionally, directly north of the Shoco Ranch and across Smith Creek Road lays another block of contiguous property comprised of State Lands, private lands, and previously conserved private lands roughly 13,430 acres in size. The wildlife corridor, riparian areas, and Smith Creek will be enhanced by the protection of the Shoco Ranch and are accessible to the general public via six access points near the ranch, as well as numerous other access points that are within 2.5 to 3 miles of the ranch (see Appendix IX, Public Access Points Map). Further, there are three access points along Smith Creek on the ranch, and one additional access point a ¼ mile from the ranch that are available to any fisherperson willing to wade within the high-water mark. This will enable current and future residents and visitors alike to enjoy the hunting and fishing opportunities on these lands. Protection of private lands in this area will help ensure that hiking, birdwatching, camping, and recreational public activities can continue as a legacy.

- Will the proposed project maintain or increase legal and physical access for the public to existing public land or waters?

While access is not mandated in the Easement; this project will continue to provide the opportunity for outdoor recreation as stated in the criteria of the bond language to the contiguous blocks of public land referenced above. Additionally, the considerable block of State Lands south of the project can be accessed directly off Highway 435 in Section 2 of T19N, R7W. Directly north of the Shoco Ranch and across Smith Creek Road lays another block of contiguous property comprised of State Lands, private lands, and previously conserved private lands.

If the Shoco Ranch were not protected via this easement, it could be subdivided and marketed as a subdivision with access to thousands of acres of State Lands. Per the proposal, these State Lands will remain open to the public via the six referenced access points (see Appendix IX, Public Access Points Map) and Shoco Ranch will remain a working ranch.

- Does the proposed project include legal access for the public on the private land proposed for conservation?

No. However, access to Smith Creek can be obtained at the Highway 435 bridge crossing over Smith Creek, a bridge approximately a ¼ mile west of the Shoco Ranch, and at two access points on the ranch from adjacent State Lands, making the creek resource available to any fisherperson willing to wade within the high-water mark.

- Will the project secure access for the public to an existing, long-standing recreation or access site?

As noted previously, there are six current public access points to the State Lands that border the Shoco Ranch and numerous other public access points to these same lands within 2.5 to 3 miles of the property (see Appendix IX, Public Access Points Map). Further, there are three access points on Smith Creek on the ranch and one a ¼ mile west of the ranch that are available to any fisherperson willing to wade within the high-water mark

- Does the site and type of access offer the possibility of recreation for people with physical limitations?

The six State Lands access points near the Shoco Ranch might be accessible to people with physical limitations as they are along public roadways. There is direct access to Smith Creek via the bridges referenced above.

- Will the project create or maintain a trailhead or trail for use by the public?

No.

- Does the project support an existing, adopted outdoor recreation plan or initiative?

No.

Protect Water Resources and Water Quality: Describe the value of the property in terms of Water Resources and Water Quality, and identify any of the following that may apply.

An estimated 4.5 miles of Smith Creek flows through the Shoco Ranch just a few feet short of its confluence with Elk Creek. Smith and Elk creeks are tributaries critical to the water supply of the farm and ranch community of Augusta, as well as the many ranches fed by the Sun River downstream. Water quality and the quantity of water supplied by Smith and Elk creeks are of great importance to the region. Conservation of the Shoco Ranch will ensure its future protection. According to the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Water Rights Division, Shoco Ranch owns six domestic water claims filed as early as July 15, 1884; four irrigation claims beginning in June 1, 1883; and two stock water claims filed in March 31, 1871.

- Does the property contain high-quality wetlands?

No (Montana DNRC).

- Are there lakes, ponds, or springs located on the property?

Yes. There are a total of eight beaver ponds (three are 15 feet deep or more) located on this property. Additionally, there are warm water springs which are open to wildlife on a year-round basis.

- Does the property contain riparian areas with intact vegetation?

Yes. Riparian vegetation is present in the floodplain and streambanks of Smith Creek. These areas provide significant wildlife habitat and shelter. Fencing is present as a means of limiting cattle access to the creek.

- Are there rivers/streams with perennial flows?

Yes. Smith Creek is a perennial stream. Further, summertime flows are augmented by conveyance of Nilan Reservoir water to irrigators to the east.

- Does the property contain land in the 100-year floodplain?

No.

- Are there water rights appurtenant to the property?

Yes. There are 12 water rights owned by the Shoco Ranch. According to the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Water Rights Division, Sally Shortridge owns six domestic water claims filed as early as July 15, 1884; four irrigation claims beginning in June 1, 1883; and two stock water claims filed in March 31, 1871. Please see Appendix VIII for water rights information.

- Is the property within a watershed that is the source of a public water supply system?

No. The town of Augusta has no classified public water supply. Groundwater wells are supported by Smith and Elk creeks which are upland of the unincorporated city.

- Is the property in an area that has been identified by a local, state or federal government agency as particularly sensitive in terms of its geology, soils, or risk to an aquifer?

No.

- Has DEQ classified the waterway on the property as A-1 or better (per ARM 17.30.606-614)?

No. The water use classification for Smith Creek is B-1 (suitable for drinking after treatment, cold water fishery) (Christine Weaver – MT DEQ).

Preserve Open Lands, Natural Areas and Historic Value: Describe the value of the property in terms of Open Lands, Natural Areas and Historic Value, and identify any of the following that may apply.

Preservation of the scenic and open-space values found on the Shoco Ranch provides substantial benefits to the people of the State of Montana, Lewis and Clark County, and the community around Augusta, in perpetuity, for future generations to experience and enjoy. The protection of open-space lands will maintain the rural, agricultural, and natural scenic qualities of the area and provide opportunities to continue traditional farming and ranching practices in perpetuity. The Shoco Ranch property can be easily seen by the general public traveling down Smith Creek Road and Highway 435, public roadways that border the Property and provide access to the vast amount of State Lands in this area. The general public recreating on those adjacent State Lands benefit from the protection of this landscape by ensuring the open-space will remain relatively undisturbed by prohibiting residential subdivision on the Property in perpetuity.

The Lewis and Clark County Commissioners have expressly recognized in Lewis and Clark County Resolution No. 2008-97, recording #3153419, passed and adopted August 12, 2008, and in the Lewis and Clark County Growth Policy, adopted February 15, 2004, the importance of preserving open-space lands, including working lands and land for protecting water and wildlife, in Lewis and Clark County.

The property is adjacent to lands owned by the State of Montana and administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, and therefore this Easement complements public land management activities and provides public benefits recognized by Treasury Regulation Section 1.170A-14(d)(4)(iv)(A)(3).

- Does the property contain scenic features that are strongly associated with the county's identity and sense of place?

Yes. When traveling on the roads past Shoco Ranch one can see grazing cattle on lush green meadows, along with various wildlife species. This pristine view showcases open space unchanged since the 1800's.

- Will the project conserve unique geologic or geographic features?

Yes. This Easement preserves scenic values of the Rocky Mountain Front and Hay Stack Butte, along Highway 435 for citizens and travelers alike.

- Does the proposed project help implement an adopted community plan or neighborhood vision?

No. Augusta does not have a formal plan in place as of this date.

- Does the property adjoin a city, town, or unincorporated community?

The town of Augusta is an unincorporated community located 4 miles from the Shoco Ranch.

- Are there threatened or endangered species, or species of concern on the property?

Yes. Threatened and endangered species include: black-footed ferret, bull trout, Canada lynx, grizzly bear, and red knot birds. Sensitive species include: American peregrine falcon, bald eagle, black-backed woodpecker, harlequin duck, and grey wolf (Laura Conway, USFS L&C National Forest, wildlife biologist)

- Is there a particularly good example of a native habitat (e.g., native grasslands, healthy stands of aspen or limber pine, riparian plant associations)?

There are hundreds of acres of native grasslands and rolling hills. The Shortridge family has worked hard to maintain wildlife habitat upon the ranch. There are a variety of riparian areas that exist that include gently rolling native grasslands, wooded creek bottoms, and grassy meadows. This habitat enhances wildlife protection and species development. Streambed protection and vegetation cover provides fishery enhancement and bird sanctuaries.

- Are there historic, archeological, or prehistoric sites located on the property including historic or prehistoric corridors and trails?

Lewis and Clark Expedition traveled over the ranch on July 8, 1806, near the top of the hill "She-She Squaw" renamed as Chief Mountain/Haystack Butte (historian Curley Anderson).

The original log homestead bunkhouse cabin has been preserved on the site. It was hand hewn from local cottonwood trees, look for the ax marks. The original cabin roof which was sod was updated to tin. The historic barn was built by a ship builder, Eric England, in 1908. Looking up from the inside it appears to be an inverted ship. This barn is designed to hold ten teams of horses and there is one stall that was dedicated to hold a permanent team. The flooring under this stall is made of cottonwood that wicks away moisture. Also featured in the barn is a hand-dug stone lined well along with a granary and harness room. Various Native American hunting artifacts have been found, including arrowheads and skinning knives.

- Are there any other outstanding or unique features of the property you would like to describe?

This piece of property has significant historical value to the community as noted above. The majestic background of the Rocky Mountain Front traveling to Bean Lake on Highway 435 showcases this property. The Shoco Ranch with its lush, green hay meadows, grazing cattle, and sparkling creek create an iconic view that is unique to this property. Conservation of this land is essential in managing growth and development in this area. The property itself is nearly surrounded by or has contiguous boundaries with State Lands, which makes this a perfect project for land stewardship. It will help retain the open landscape, protect the unique natural resources, and maintain the pristine environment from land development for generations to come.

The Shoco Ranch is an important piece of property that will further the purposes of the Lewis and Clark Open Lands Program. If the ranch were not protected it could be subdivided and would provide special access to the multiple thousands of acres of State Lands that are currently accessible to the public via a six access points (see Appendix IX, Public Access Points Map).

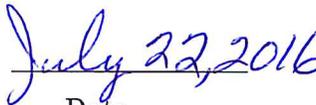
Required Supporting Documentation: Please refer to the 'Required Attachments for Level Two Application for Projects Funded by the Open Lands Program, Lewis and Clark County, Montana' document.

I/we have prepared this application to the best of our ability and knowledge and request that Lewis and Clark County evaluate this request for funding based on the information contained herein. I/we understand the project selection process described in the Lewis and Clark Open Lands Program Guide. I/we understand that a recommendation that this project move to the Due Diligence Phase is not a guarantee of funding. If any information or circumstance changes substantially the project may be subject to reconsideration or reapplication, as described in the Program Guide.

I am authorized to sign this application as the applicant/landowner or a representative of the Sponsor.



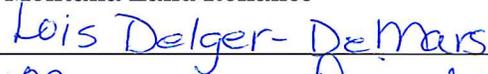
Sally Shortridge



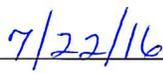
Date

And/or



The Montana Land Reliance
By: 

Its: 



Date

SHOCO RANCH

Lewis and Clark County Open Lands Program Amendment to Level Two Application

Landowner and Agency Identification

Landowner:

Shoco Ranch
Sally Shortridge
P.O. Box 333
Augusta, MT 59410
406 562-3553 (Ranch)
406-235-0176 (Cell)

Sponsoring Organization:

The Montana Land Reliance
Jay Erickson, Managing Director
Lois DeMars, Managing Director
324 Fuller Avenue
P.O. Box 355
Helena, MT 59624
406-443-7027

The purpose of this amendment to the Level Two Application is to clarify the funding being sought from Lewis and Clark County Open Lands.

Funding: Describe the general budget of the project and any of the following that apply.

- **Funding for the conservation easement of \$783,000 is requested from the County.**

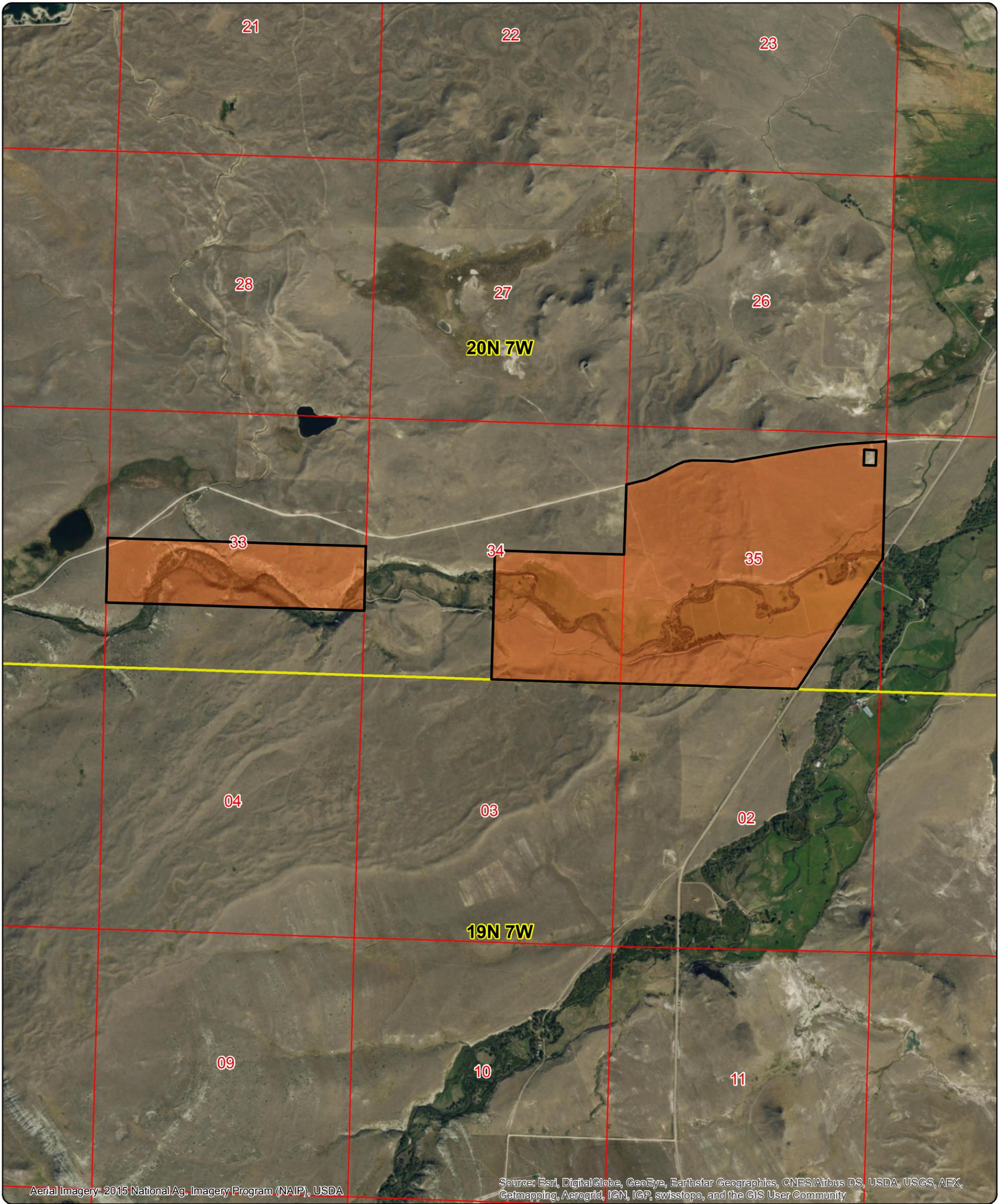
This request is for the purchase of the Easement for \$729,000 (90% of the appraised value of the conservation easement). This value has been established by a qualified appraisal obtained for the Shoco Ranch (see Appendix V). Easement value is \$810,000 less \$81,000 (10% landowner donation).

Project costs related to the completion of the Easement (environmental assessment, appraisal, title insurance, resource (baseline) documentation report, mineral remoteness report, deed preparation, closing and recording fees) in the amount of \$54,000 are also being requested from Lewis and Clark County.

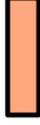
In addition to \$729,000 for the conservation easement, the applicant and the landowner request the county reimburse the following transaction costs, stewardship fees, and miscellaneous expenses.

Montana Land Reliance and Shoco Ranch Project Costs

Appraisal	9,000.00
Legal Review	2,500.00
Title	2,000.00
Mineral Guarantee	300.00
Mineral Remoteness Report	1,300.00
Resource Documentation Report	3,100.00



SHOCO PROPERTY
PROJECT AERIAL PHOTO MAP
 Date: June 13, 2016

 Subject Property
 Property Acreage: 836



Matt Heimel - Fwd: Front easement funding?

From: Mike Murray
To: George Thebarga; bocc
Date: 10/19/2016 3:07 PM
Subject: Fwd: Front easement funding?

>>> On 10/19/2016 at 11:06 AM, in message
 <CADFMXdeNMdTsj4Exfmc66ryWUqKG2b0vqiPSc8ADk+TMraYthw@mail.gmail.com>, Mary Hollow
 <mary@pricklypearlt.org> wrote:

Mike - Just FYI. I talked to Andrea after the hearing last week. She said there was a question about easement funding options on the Rocky Mountain Front. Gary wasn't there so I checked with him (Gary Sullivan w/USFWS) - he provided some information below. On the private side, TNC and TCF also provide funding for easements if those project meet their standards.

Mary

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Sullivan, Gary** <gary_l_sullivan@fws.gov>
 Date: Mon, Oct 17, 2016 at 11:27 AM
 Subject: Re: Front easement funding?
 To: Mary Hollow <mary@pricklypearlt.org>
 Cc: Dave Carr <dcarr@tnc.org>

Good Morning Mary:

Yes the Fish & Wildlife Service's conservation easement program continues to thrive along the Rocky Mountain Front. To date, we've protected over 105,000 acres of private working ranch land in Lewis & Clark, Teton and Pondera Counties. As you know, our easement program is funded by Congress through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which has provided over \$28 Million dollars since the program's initial appropriation in 2006.

I'm very familiar with the Shortridge property south of Augusta. In fact, I worked with Sally on a conservation easement proposal back in 2008 for her 835 acre property along Smith Creek. We actually made her a written offer to purchase an easement for the full market value of \$498,000 but she ultimately walked away from the deal. She then contacted me in 2012 and 2015 to inquire again about our interest in protecting the property. Unfortunately, in that interim time period, she constructed three additional residences and split off a 20 acre parcel (still in her name) along the Smith Creek Road. In our opinion, the biological values of this relatively small property have diminished to a point that it's no longer a priority for protection under our program.

We continue to have to strong landowner interest in our easement program along the Front but unfortunately don't have enough federal funds to meet this demand. The project (officially known as the Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Area) is included in the President's proposed FY17 Budget Request for \$1.5 Million. Obviously we won't know whether we'll have any funding until after the election when Congress will have to act on

the FY17 Interior Appropriations bill.

Good to hear from you... please don't hesitate to contact me if you need additional information,

Best,

Gary

Gary L. Sullivan, State Coordinator
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Division of Realty - Montana Acquisition Office
922 Bootlegger Trail
Great Falls, MT 59404
 [\(406\) 727-7400 Ext 225](tel:4067277400)

On Fri, Oct 14, 2016 at 3:59 PM, Mary Hollow <mary@pricklypearlt.org> wrote:

Dave and Gary, the Shortidge Ranch easement on the Front came up yesterday day - there was a question about other potential funding sources for easement or match. Wanted to check in with you two to see if you could provide any information? Thanks,
Mary

Sent from my iPhone

--

Mary Hollow -- Prickly Pear Land Trust -- 406.240.4907



If this is an unsolicited spam message, please click this link to report it: [Report Spam](#)



MONTANA ASSOCIATION OF LAND TRUSTS



Glenn Marx, Executive Director 490-1659
P.O. Box 892, Helena MT 59624
Email: montanamalt@q.com
Website: montanalandtrusts.org

October 31, 2016

Matt Heibel
Lewis and Clark County Open Lands Program
316 N. Park Ave Room 223
Helena, MT 59623

Dear Matt and Advisory Council Members,

The Montana Association of Land Trusts – a statewide association of Montana’s twelve major nonprofit land trust organizations – would like to endorse and urge county open land program funding for the Shoco Ranch Conservation Easement.

The Rocky Mountain Front is a legendary and iconic Montana landscape feature and has been a focal point of private land conservation for decades. Its topography, wildlife, culture and history makes the Front – from a conservation perspective – a Montana, western and national priority. Several different public and nonprofit organizations have long recognized the intrinsic conservation value of the Front, and it is heartening to see the Montana Land Reliance work with landowner Sally Shortridge on a conservation easement on the Shoco Ranch near Augusta.

The Shoco Ranch natural features, which include a mile of the Smith Creek fishery, grizzly bear spring habitat and movement corridor, elk range and calving habitat, all nestled in the shadow of the Front make this an attractive conservation proposal. In addition, the Shoco Ranch is bordered by 21,000 acres of state school trust land, which makes the 838-acre ranch even more attractive from a conservation perspective.

Also, given the property’s proximity to the spectacular Front range – and given the property’s proximity to two nearby subdivisions totaling 200 potential tracts – it is uncertain how long the window to retain the Shoco property as a working ranch with open lands, wildlife habitat and agricultural values will remain open. Given the apparent development pressure in the area, now appears to be the best time for the county to move forward in funding the proposed conservation easement.

The Lewis and Clark County Open Lands Program Guide lists this program goals: *Conserve working farms and ranches; Conserve working forests; Protect habitat for fish and wildlife; Provide opportunities for outdoor recreation; Protect water resources and water quality; Preserve open lands and natural areas; and Manage growth and development.* The Shoco Ranch proposal lands firmly on each individual provision, and clearly lands firmly on the overall program purposes and objectives.

Thank you for considering this recommendation and for your work on the county open land program. Please let me know if you have any questions about the Montana Association of Land Trusts, Montana private land conservation or this letter or recommendation for the Shoco Ranch project.

Sincerely,

Glenn Marx
Montana Association of Land Trusts



October 11th, 2016



**The Vital Ground
Foundation**

20 Fort Missoula Road
Missoula, Montana 59804
406-549-8650
Fax 406-549-8787
INFO@VITALGROUND.ORG
WWW.VITALGROUND.ORG

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Utah

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ryan A. Lutey, J.D.

Lewis and Clark County Commission
316 N. Park Ave. Rm. 345
Helena, MT 59623

Dear Honorable Commissioners,

I am writing to express The Vital Ground Foundation's strong support for the Lewis and Clark County Open Space Bond application to fund the Montana Land Reliance's acquisition of a permanent conservation easement on the 836-acre Shoco Ranch, which is currently under review by the Commission.

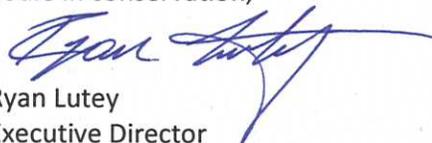
Vital Ground is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) charitable organization that operates as a land trust. Vital Ground's mission is to ensure the future of North America's grizzly bear populations for future generations by conserving wildlife habitat and supporting programs that reduce conflicts between bears and humans.

As you know, Montana's irreplaceable Rocky Mountain Front anchors one of the most robust segments of the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem's thriving grizzly bear subpopulation, and the recovery and health of that subpopulation is a remarkable conservation success story that deserves celebration. However, sustainable grizzly bear recovery along Montana's Rocky Mountain Front will continue to require that all stakeholders – agricultural operators, conservationists and other outdoors enthusiasts, and local, state and federal governments – to make a commitment to maintaining social tolerance for the species. Preventing conflicts between wildlife and people is critical to this premise, and the acquisition of a conservation easement on the Shoco Ranch is an excellent example of how that collaboration functions "on the ground."

This voluntary agreement to prevent inappropriate subdivision and development along a major riparian corridor, a natural travel route for grizzly bears and other wildlife, will preempt significant potential for future conflicts between grizzlies and people. In a landscape as intact as the Smith Creek drainage, every single human encroachment into the area presents both additional obstacles to wildlife movement as well as potential sites for attractants that can bring bears into unnatural proximity and direct contact with humans.

Along with the many other benefits associated with protecting a fourth-generation, working cattle ranch from subdivision and development, an open space bond investment in the conservation of the Shoco Ranch will permanently strengthen the ability of people and grizzlies to share Lewis and Clark County's remarkable landscape long into the future. Thank you for your consideration of this project and for your support of the County's desire and efforts to permanently protect open space, wildlife habitat and agricultural resources.

Yours in conservation,


Ryan Lutey
Executive Director

Shoco Ranch Conservation Easement

To: Lewis and Clark County

My name is Elizabeth Restemayer and I am in favor of the Shoco Ranch Conservation Easement. The ranch is surrounded by thousands of acres of State Land and it is vital for this land to be conserved for the wildlife that travel through or live there. Should this land ever be subdivided it would conceivably cut off the wildlife from traveling through to adjacent State Lands.

Additionally, any subdivision has the potential to pollute the creek or deplete the creek to the point of diminishing the water supply to the Town of Augusta.

I have lived in Montana for 60 years and would like to see the landscapes and wildlife that we all value to remain the same for my grandchildren and great grandchildren to enjoy.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth D Restemayer 2/3/14

Elizabeth Restemayer

April 8, 2016

Lewis and Clark County
Community Development and Planning
Attn: Matt Heimel
316 North Park Rm 230
Helena, MT 59623

Re: Open Lands Program – Shoco Ranch

Mr. Heimel,

We are writing this to encourage the above program to consider Sally Shortridge of Shoco Ranch for participation in said program. We believe Shoco Ranch meets the requirements of the Open Lands Program.

Wildlife is abundant on the property and Smith Creek, which flows through the property, offers blue ribbon fishing opportunities. A conservation easement would allow this to continue for generations to come.

As owner of Shoco Ranch, Sally takes pride in the maintenance of the property and the continuing protection of the environment.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brad and Shari Wenz", written in a cursive style.

Brad and Shari Wenz
8605A Ranch Club Road
Missoula MT 59808

Montana
HUNTING & FISHING
News

Lewis and Clark County
Community Development and Planning
Attn: Matt Heimel
316 North Park Room 230
Helena, MT 59623

RE: Open Lands Program - Shoco Ranch

Dear Sir/Madame:

We write this letter in support of Sally Shortridge and her request for participation in the Open Lands Program in Montana. Sally's properties including the Shoco Ranch meet the requirements of the Open Lands Program - all areas, as we understand the program.

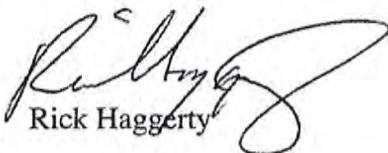
The Shoco Ranch protects water along the South Fork Creek and Sun River, providing water for wildlife and exceptional fishing for recreation. The Shoco Ranch also preserves open land for recreation for quality upland bird and whitetail hunting.

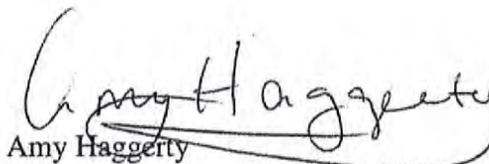
The Shoco Ranch sits on some of the most beautiful land in Montana and Sally is dedicated to maintaining the beauty and health of the land.

The Shoco Ranch offers Montanans and non-residents the opportunity to fish and hunt these lands. It's important that opportunities like this exist in Montana.

Thank you for consideration.

Respectfully;


Rick Haggerty


Amy Haggerty

1395 Mustang Road, Helena, MT. 59602
Phone: (406) 370-1368 or e-mail: huntingfishingnews@yahoo.com
www.huntingfishingnews.net

To Whom it may Concern:

This letter is in support of Sally Shortridge and the Shoco Ranch conservation easement. Sally provides hunting and fishing opportunities for sportsmen and women as well as being a great steward of the land. This ranch should be protected for future generations. The ranch is vary valuable for wildlife,fish, clean water and open space. I have my ranch under easement so I know how dedicated Sally is to the ranch and Montana

Keith Ward

Owner Bob Ward's sporting goods

19955 9ML RD

Huson MT. 59846

March 31, 2016

To: Lewis and Clark County Citizens Advisory Committee

From: Deborah Hanson, DrPH
PO Box 91
Ulm MT 59485
406-750-0290
dddh@gmx.com



Re: Open-space bond for Shoco Ranch

I am writing in support of the designation of Shoco Ranch as eligible for an open-space bond for Lewis and Clark County. The express purpose of your Committee in accordance with the by-laws is to facilitate the use of open-space bonds for several purposes, three of which are protecting wildlife areas , providing for recreation, and managing growth and development (Article III, Section 2.D, 2.F and 2.G). While a case could be made for the application of the other purposes, from my perspective these three are the primary ones.

The first purpose which applies is the protection of wildlife areas. Deer are abundant on the ranch and elk can often be found along the river. Antelope are sometimes on the dryland pastures. The presence of a grizzly on the ranch made headlines a couple of years ago when he made his way into the barn!

The second applicable purpose is the provision of recreation. The owner of Shoco Ranch provides fishing and bird hunting to those who would otherwise not have an opportunity to engage in these types of activities.

The final appropriate use for the open-space bonds which I have explicitly identified is the management of growth and development. This reason is particularly apropos for Shoco Ranch. Those of us in Montana are incredibly fortunate to be able to live under the big sky with lots of elbow room. That elbow room is being threatened due to its very existence, however. People from out of state want what is available here. Unfortunately the more the population grows, the more open space is taken in order to provide housing for them. The eastern slopes of the Rockies and the Augusta area in particular are very desirable. The primary reason that the current owner has applied for open-space designation is to protect the ranch from development. Her desire is to prevent the creation of a suburb, exclusive housing development, or ranchettes.

You have the ability to assist Shoco Ranch to be intact for generations to come. What a great legacy for you to take credit!

Please call me if you have any questions or just want to say hello. Thank you for caring about our state by volunteering your time and thoughtful consideration to this important work.

Lewis & Clark County
Community Development & Planning
316 N. Park, Rm 230
Helena, MT 59623

ATTN: Matt Heime

RE: Shoco Ranch Preservation

Sally Shortridge of Augusta, Montana owns and resides on a beautiful ranch on the front range of the Rockies. These types of properties are coveted for turning a ranch into a subdivision, enabling the new owner to sell a few parcels to cover their investment.

The Shoco Ranch is a multi-generational ranch, owned currently by the "last" rancher in the family. Sally wants to leave a legacy by making sure this pristine, well-managed ranch is not diminished by future development.

She has been an excellent steward of that land and has put her heart and soul into improving this property over many years.

Please support her in protecting this magnificent working ranch.

over →

February 2, 2016

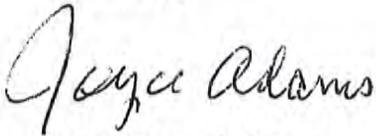
To Whom it May Concern:

This letter is for the purpose of comments in support of the Shoco Ranch on Smith Creek out of Augusta being placed in a Conservation Easement. I grew up in this area on the Bean Ranch, three generations in my family. During these years I have watched this beautiful country slowly being eaten up by subdivisions, cabins being built and mountain trails being closed to the public because of closed access.

The Shoco Ranch provides varied wildlife habitat, where many white tail deer, elk, and even grizzly bear reside. The creek itself is great fishing, pure water, which then feeds into the town of Augusta. It would be a shame to see this beautiful land subdivided, putting all this in danger of pollution and closed public access.

Please approve the conservation easement request to keep the land as it is for future generations. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joyce Adams". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Joyce (Bean) Adams

AC Cobb Charolais Ranch
Augusta, Montana

March 13, 2016

TO: Lewis and Clark County

RE: Shoco Ranch

I am writing this letter of recommendation for the Shoco Ranch in Augusta, Montana to utilize the Lewis and Clark County open-space bond measure to conserve this ranch.

The Shoco Ranch fulfills all the requirements under this Conservation bond measure to qualify. The ranch is a beautiful, diversified, well-managed operation which encompasses stream drainages, wildlife habitat, conservation of agricultural lands and access of recreational opportunities for the public.

I currently serve on our Lewis and Clark Conservation District Board, and I cannot stress enough how important it is to keep our streams healthy and sustainable for the future. Conserving the Shoco Ranch would greatly enhance the water issues of the area by safeguarding the waterways of Smith Creek, which runs through the ranch and Elk Creek, which is used for irrigation by the ranch.

The Augusta area of Lewis and Clark County currently is a large segment of land with open spaces for now due to the present agricultural operations. Conserving the Shoco Ranch will enhance the future of protected lands along the Rocky Mountain Front. We need to hold onto the vision of this conservation measure for our future by utilizing it now for the Shoco Ranch. This is a great opportunity for the Augusta area and Lewis and Clark County.

You may call me at 406-562-3694 if you have any questions or concerns regarding my support of this issue. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sarah Howe-Cobb

To Lewis & Clark County

3/21/16

We are writing this letter in support of the Shoco Ranch Conservation Easement in Augusta, MT. Shoco Ranch is surrounded by thousands of acres of state lands and is the habitat of various, abundant wildlife. There is a clean, sparkling creek running through as well as wide, open beautiful landscape. We have hunted and appreciated its awesome beauty.

This easement will conserve the wildlife habitat and protect these lands for future generations to enjoy. Let's help Sally Shortridge in her effort to keep Montana "The Last Best Place".

Sincerely

Ruth Rozokat



William Rozokat Jr.



Great Falls, MT

Linda and Larry Brandvold

270 8th Lane NE

Fairfield, Mt, 59436

To: Lewis and Clark County

Subject: Shoco ranch

We have known Sally Shortridge for a number of years as friends. She is the owner of the beautiful and well managed Shoco Ranch. We feel that this would be an excellent addition to your conservation program in the open space bond measure for Lewis and Clark County. This would preserve this great property from development and protect the openness of the Rocky Mountain Front.

Thank you,

Linda Brandvold
Larry J Brandvold

Linda and Larry Brandvold

Lewis and Clark County

Community Development and Planning

Special Districts Planner

316 North Park, Room 230

Helena, MT 59623

Greetings Mr. Matt Heimel,

I would to submit comments in support of the Shoco Ranch Open Lands Easement. I am an avid fisherman and have fished Smith Creek and appreciate the ability to access public land. This project ensures open lands and recreational spaces for myself and those generations that come after me. This opportunity to create contiguous land blocks for public use is important as it discourages subdivisions along our valuable waterways. As everyone knows development for homes on our stream beds is becoming the norm in many rural communities. This project will showcase how these easements will protect and insure our way of life.

Sincerely,



Doug Reutzel

Augusta, MT 59610

To: Lewis & Clark County
Re: Shoco Ranch

Forty years ago, my husband and I lived in Augusta for 2 or 3 years. My husband grew up in the Augusta area, which gives him a unique perspective of the great features of the area. Those features include excellent water quality and open natural lands which provide habitat for many species of wildlife.

I was able to appreciate those features as well in my short tenure in the area. Much of our recreational time was spent venturing into the mountains, and observing the pristine and unspoiled areas.

We are writing this letter in support of the Shoco Ranch conservation easement project. We think this project will contribute to maintaining the water quality in the Augusta area. If water quality is maintained, the positive effects on preservation of open lands and wildlife habitat will naturally fall into place.

We moved back to the area a year ago, and continue to visit the Shoco Ranch and Augusta. We have found the area to be much the same as before. It is therefore important for a conservation easement to prevent any future subdivision of prime bottom land in the Smith Creek area.

Tim & Janice Nott

To: Lewis & Clark County

RE: Shoro Ranch

I am in support of the Shoro Ranch conservation easement project. It will be a wonderful benefit for future generations to be able to enjoy the land in an original & untouched state. It will also benefit the native wildlife who migrate through and give birth to young on that property. As a business owner and resident of Augusta, I am all for the protection of the Smith River and surrounding area being kept in its original state.

Gail Wenger
owner/Mel's Denier
P.O. Box 264
Augusta, MT
59410
562-3408

Re: Shoco Ranch Conservation Easement

Hello,

We are writing in support of the Shoco Ranch Conservation Easement in Augusta, Montana.

We believe that creating this easement will maintain a sustainable parcel of land that would benefit the wildlife that not only make this land their home, but the others that use this land as a migration corridor.

My husband has worked on the Ranch for about 11 years now and in that time we have both seen Grizzly Bears, Black Bears, Elk, Deer (both Mule + whitetail), Antelope and many other smaller animals living on this land. We have also witnessed more than once the migration of herds of Elk through the Ranch.

We have both had the opportunity to fish the Creek (catch + release) + have caught many Brown Trout. The water is so clean + clear and this easement would also help to preserve that clean source of water that then travels down to our Town of Augusta. As we all live on well water in this Town, a healthy + clean source of water is crucial to the Town's survival.

With land values as they are + developments springing up all over, we are afraid that the eventual fate of this land would be subdivision which would not only affect + threaten the wildlife that call this land home, but also

the quality of the water in the creek.

When we first moved to Montana we had viewed pictures of Haystack Butte & Sawtooth Mountain Ranges from the 1800's and remarkably they still look exactly the same today. By landowners, such as Sally Shorsidge granting Conservation easements on their land it preserves the Montana we have loved from the first moment we laid eyes on it, for future generations to come.

Sincerely

Ms. & Mrs. Hudson
Augusta Montana

To: Lewis and Clark County

Community Development and Planning

Special Districts Planner

316 North Park, Room 230

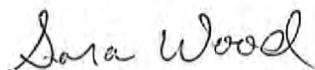
Helena, MT 59623

Mr. Matt Heimel

My name is Sara Wood and the Shoco Ranch Conservation Easement has my support. The ranch has been in the Shortridge family for many generations and is a beautiful place with panoramic views of the Rocky Mountains. It is also full of wildlife that needs to be preserved. The water that runs in Smith Creek is clear and clean and needs to stay that way since this creek feeds into Elk Creek which then runs through our Town and is a source of water for us. Should a Developer ever acquire this property it will potentially ruin the water supply and the habitat for the wildlife.

I am a school teacher and firmly believe in conserving our wildlife, farms, ranches and water for future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sara Wood".

Sara Wood

My wife Lona and I think this is a wonderful idea that Sally is preserving Shoco Ranch the way she is. We have lived here since 1992 working for outfitters and ranchers, working for a number of years with my pack string in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. We love the beauty of this country, living here is like stepping back in time and enjoying the wonders of God's country the way it was meant to be. To know that Shoco ranch will remain the way it is forever is very comforting.

Thank you,

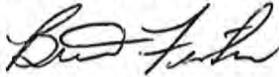
A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lona Gharst". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Larry and Lona Gharst

To: Lewis and Clark County- Open Lands

I have spent numerous hours in the open space lands of Montana which is my life, love and livelihood. I have worked, and respected wildlife of my beloved home here in Augusta. I have experienced the wildlife from Grizzly Bears, Mountain Lions, Wolves, Moose, Coyotes to Whitetail Deer on this ranch. I have been employed by the Shoco Ranch, have rode for the brand for many years. I recognize the heritage and the value of this ranch to the area. This easement would make sure the ongoing stewardship practices of Shoco will continue. And it will make sure my open land will be open forever.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Burt Fisher".

Burt Fisher

Lewis and Clark County

Community Development and Planning

Attn: Matt Heimel

316 North Park Room 230

Helena, MT 59623

Dear Sirs,

Please accept this letter in support of Sally Shortridge in the application in the Open Lands Program for Montana. This ranch has been in the Shortridge family for over four generations with Sally Shortridge being the great granddaughter of the original settlers. Sally, understanding the unique value of her ranch and the fact that she is the last living heir of the land would like to provide a living legacy for the future of the ranch.

Sally has the vision that the SHOCO ranch should continue in its current operations, rather than seeing it divided into small housing parcels or commercial development. This Easement is a land trust – a promise, that this ranch will always be there for her community and for generations to come. Sharing Sally's deep connection to the land with a vision for the future – SHOCO Ranch Open Lands Easement would provide wildlife habitat, open spaces, current ranching, agricultural and recreational values will be sustained. There is no better promise to her and her families legacy -than this project.

Sincerely,



Laura Nicolai

From: "Sally Shortridge" <shocoranch@3rivers.net>
Subject: FW:
Date: Tue, June 21, 2016 8:55 pm
To: lauran@linctel.net

Hi

please print and deliver on Wed to MLR. Thanks in advance.ss

-----Original Message-----

From: Dave Novis [mailto:nov@novcomt.com]
Sent: Tuesday, June 21, 2016 8:42 PM
To: Shortridge Sally <birds@shocoranch.com>
Subject:

Dear Mat and the Lewis and Clark Open Space Board.

Helen Marie Shortridge (Sally's mother) and Marguerite Novis (my mother) were cousins. They became close as sisters having so many wonderful times together at the Bohler Ranch (later to become Sally's Ranch) over their entire lives.

Sally and I have continued with the great family relationship.

It's pretty remarkable that our Great Grand Parents, Grand Parents, Parents, Sally and Myself, and now my Wife and Children have continued this family relationship for over four generations with the Bohler/Shortridge family.

Edward Novis (my Father) called Sally's Ranch "The Plumb of the Rocky Mountain Front". He always said It must be protected for future generations.

Now I'm writing this letter to support Sally and this very critical conservation easement for her Ranch and Montana.

The habitat for the Antelope, Deer, Elk, Brown, Black, and Grizzly Bears, Rainbow and Brown Trout is Pristine. It is a incremental part of the Rocky Mountain Front.

The water and open space of her ranch bordering the vast acreage of the State of Montana allow for this very fragile balance of wildlife and modern man.

If we don't protect our environment by preserving the pristine areas of Montana there won't be any beauty for our children and grand children to enjoy.

Thank You

David, Bridget, Lindsay, & Eddy Novis

Sent from my iPhone



a non-profit organization benefiting all water users in the basin
816 Grizzly Drive Great Falls, Montana 59404 406-727-4437

TO: Lewis & Clark County

RE: Shoco Ranch

The Sun River Watershed Group (SRWG) is writing this letter of support for the Shoco Ranch conservation easement project through the Lewis & Clark County Open Lands program. This project will continue to protect our rural way of life while protecting this precious environment.

For more than 20 years the SRWG has worked with many partners to find win-win solutions to complex natural resource issues. Two key components of our long-term goals is the sustainability of the local agriculture economy while ensuring the long-term survivability of these precious natural resources - which the Shoco Ranch conservation easement project does both. What better way to find these win-win solutions than to protect a working ranch and our natural resources at the same time.

The SRWG considers what this area will look like in the long-term future when evaluating the pros and cons of most projects. So with the Shoco Ranch conservation easement project will it: 1) protect ground and surface water supplies for future generations to meet all needs - YES; 2) protect water quality for wildlife and people - YES; 3) improve our local agriculture economy - YES; 4) improve other sectors of our local economy - YES; 5) protect wildlife habitat for critical species - YES; 6) ensure the public has long-term access to public lands - YES; 7) protect the healthy Smith River and its riparian corridor - YES; and 8) have negative effects to anyone or anything - NO. So with all these key points considered, the SRWG supports the Shoco Ranch conservation easement project moving forward.

Please help us improve our teamwork in the Sun River Watershed by supporting this project. Call Alan Rollo at 406-727-4437 if you have any questions concerning our support for this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Chase". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Chase, President
Sun River Watershed Group

Cc: Sally Shortridge

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
1	Project Name	Project Sponsor	Application Year	Project Type	Acres	Appraised Value	Request for County Open Land Funding	Requested Per Acre	Other Funding Sources	Approved by BoCC	Approved Per Acre	Approximate Total Project Cost	ROI of Requested Funding	ROI of Approved Funding
2	Lincoln Community River Park	Five Valleys Land Trust	2016	Acquisition	9.45	\$85,000.00	\$113,300.00	\$11,989.42	\$21,300	TBD	TBD	\$134,600.00	-24.98%	TBD
3	Shoco Ranch	Montana Land Reliance	2016	Conservation Easement	836	\$810,000.00	\$783,000.00	\$936.60	\$81,000	TBD	TBD	\$864,000.00	3.45%	TBD
4	Gehring Ranch	Prickly Pear Land Trust	2016	Conservation Easement	2,888	\$2,210,000.00	\$1,000,000.00	\$346.26	\$1,220,000	TBD	TBD	\$2,220,000.00	121.00%	TBD
5	South Hills	Prickly Pear Land Trust	2015	Acquisition	110	\$392,500.00	\$260,000.00	\$2,363.64	\$132,500	\$273,303.72	\$2,484.58	\$392,500.00	50.96%	44%
6	Welch Ranch	Prickly Pear Land Trust	2015	Conservation Easement	125	\$452,000.00	\$180,000.00	\$1,440.00	\$224,000	\$228,000.00	\$1,824.00	\$404,000.00	151.11%	98%
7	Specimen Creek	Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	2015	Acquisition	729	\$648,000.00	\$260,000.00	\$356.65	\$290,000	\$260,000.00	\$356.65	\$550,000.00	149.23%	149%
8	Johnston Ranch	Prickly Pear Land Trust	2014	Conservation Easement	507	\$360,000.00	\$324,000.00	\$639.05	\$36,000	\$324,000.00	\$639.05	\$360,000.00	11.11%	11%
9	York Gulch	Prickly Pear Land Trust	2013	Acquisition	286	\$660,000.00	\$205,000.00	\$716.78	\$455,000	\$205,000.00	\$716.78	\$660,000.00	221.95%	222%
10	Aspen Trails	Prickly Pear Land Trust	2012	Easement 226 Acq. 30	266.32	\$800,000.00	\$250,000.00	\$938.72	\$550,000	\$304,000.00	\$1,141.48	\$800,000.00	220.00%	163%
11	Milburn	Prickly Pear Land Trust	2011	Easement 260 Acq. 10	270	\$569,000.00	\$284,500.00	\$1,053.70	\$284,500	\$284,500.00	\$1,053.70	\$569,000.00	100.00%	100%
12	McDonough Ranch	The Conservation Fund	2010	Conservation Easement	7175.83	\$3,175,000.00	\$750,000.00	\$104.52	\$2,425,000	\$317,500.00	\$44.25	\$3,175,000.00	323.33%	900%
13	Total/Average									\$2,196,303.72	\$1,032.56			
14	Draft base on best available information. Please feel free to send my your comments.													