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Friends,

Although we like trees, we don’t actually hug them. We do, however, embrace the forest.

The Sonoran Institute’s work in communities throughout the West often has impacts outside the immediate area. Helping a county create and adopt an effective, comprehensive land-use plan, for example, can benefit an important wildlife migration corridor that extends far beyond the county’s borders. Protecting a local natural or cultural landmark can give an economic boost to a wide area.

Featured in this report, our work in the northern Rockies of Montana, Idaho and Wyoming is an excellent example of a mosaic of individual projects that, when taken together, benefit an entire region. Success in communities near Yellowstone National Park and westward into Idaho contributes to the well-being of the people, wildlife, watersheds and other natural systems of the larger territory.

To sharpen our focus on the big picture, the Institute is in the midst of a strategic planning process. We are studying the trends, challenges and opportunities coming down the road in the next five years and beyond, and we are carefully deciding where and how to best apply and leverage our energy and resources.

You can be certain that those decisions will incorporate the Sonoran Institute’s core values: passion for the land; respect for people; collaboration; civil dialogue; knowledge; resilience; practical solutions; conviction that conservation and thoughtful planning complement prosperity; and, of course, big-picture thinking. Even in the swiftly changing West, some things are constant.

Best regards,

Luther Propst
Executive Director

...the Sonoran Institute’s core values: passion for the land; respect for people; collaboration; civil dialogue; knowledge; resilience; practical solutions; conviction that conservation and thoughtful planning complement prosperity; and big-picture thinking.
Montanan John Crumley never imagined himself in cahoots with conservationists. Now the Madison County rancher considers himself one of them. “They’re not so bad,” he acknowledged at the Sonoran Institute’s Western Leadership Institute† last fall.

Crumley began collaborating with the Institute and other conservation groups in the 90s and helped form the Madison Valley Ranchlands Group, of which he is now president. The valley’s rural community is known for proactive efforts to protect its natural assets and sustain its ranching heritage. These efforts also affect a bigger picture — Madison County is part of a region often called Greater Yellowstone.

Unfettered movement of wildlife is a hallmark of this area. Local newspapers recount amazing journeys: a lovesick wolverine traveled from northern Yellowstone National Park to Pocatello, Idaho, and back; pronghorn antelope migrate from Wyoming’s Grand Teton National Park nearly to Utah; mule deer annually trek the length of Montana’s Gallatin and Bridger ranges.

Preserving islands of habitat and the connections between them becomes more challenging as the human population grows. The good news is that not only wild creatures are connected to these lands. People — old-timers and newcomers alike — are intimately linked to the mountains, rivers and plains. Opinion polls and land-use planning goals reveal broad support for preserving wildlife habitat, agricultural lands and rivers.

The Northern Rockies is a big chunk of terrain, so the Sonoran Institute is strategic about where to focus its resources. The goal is to collaborate with rural landowners and community leaders to identify, conserve and protect natural systems and quality of life. Our team scrutinizes ecological importance, degree of threat, local support for planning and other criteria to ensure that projects benefit local communities. Often, the bigger neighborhood also benefits, including landscapes critical to wandering wildlife.

A case in point is the Institute’s slate of projects in five huge counties that connect the Yellowstone region to the wilderness areas of central Idaho. The counties harbor world-class trout streams, spectacular wildlife refuges, vast mountains and valleys, farmers, ranchers, hunters, anglers, and fast-growing communities. The Sonoran Institute offers multiple conservation approaches, planning tools and rural-development strategies in this region. The Western Community Stewardship Forum* and other Institute resources help communities conserve natural and cultural assets and connect the land and its inhabitants.

*Western Community Stewardship Forum
Officials and other decision-makers from all of the counties featured here have attended the Sonoran Institute’s Western Community Stewardship Forum (WCSF) to acquire tools for addressing growth and land use in their communities. In March, eight counties in the Mountain West sent 48 participants to WCSF, bringing the total to 285 in the forum’s seven-year history.

*Western Leadership Institute
In September the Sonoran Institute presented its first Western Leadership Institute (WLI), drawing 47 residents from Madison and Missoula counties in Montana; Lemhi and Fremont counties in Idaho; Chaffee, Routt and La Plata counties in Colorado; and Maricopa County, Arizona. WLI gives engaged citizens training to be leaders in communities grappling with growth and change.
BEAVERHEAD COUNTY, MONTANA…
hasn’t seen as much rural sprawl as other parts of western Montana, but recreational homes are popping up, especially near the famous Big Hole and Beaverhead rivers. County commissioners learned ways to protect natural assets and sustain their economy at the Sonoran Institute’s Western Community Stewardship Forum. Institute projections raised concerns about growth’s effect on ranching and public finances. Our fiscal impact study of alternative growth patterns illustrated that far-flung development will stretch county budgets for roads, emergency services and other expenses, while better growth management will benefit agriculture and taxpayers.

GALLATIN COUNTY, MONTANA…
Hebgen Basin at the edge of Yellowstone National Park attracts lovers of wildlife and wild places — assets threatened by two large development projects proposed in the late 90s. Residents requested the Sonoran Institute’s help to rewrite their land-use plan and zoning regulations, which now feature incentives to cluster homes away from wildlife migration routes. Land purchased for open space conserved nearly 500 acres of important habitat. In the county’s north, four years of work by Bozeman Pass citizens and the Institute resulted in a 23,000-acre zoning district to protect wildlife migration and rural quality of life.

FREMONT COUNTY, IDAHO…
— its southern portion is the “seed potato capital of the world” and its north is a haven for moose, elk and big fat trout. With increasing development, officials and citizens recognize the need to update and strengthen land-use plans and regulations. County commissioners participated in the Sonoran Institute’s Western Community Stewardship Forum — twice. Concerned citizens formed Fremont Growth Solutions (FGS) and, with the Institute, are hosting land-use planning educational forums. Some attended September’s Western Leadership Institute. The Sonoran Institute is helping fund an FGS staff person to support the county’s work on an effective land-use plan.

MADISON COUNTY, MONTANA…
residents are learning how the area can grow without sacrificing ranchlands, wildlife or the beloved Madison River. A new county growth policy approved last fall is part of one of rural Montana’s best efforts to manage growth. The Sonoran Institute gave growth-management training to county officials and leadership training to Madison Growth Solutions, a group of ranchers, business people and other citizens. The Institute helped identify growth-management tools that make sense in this rural county.
Collaborating for 40 Million Acres

Nearly 40 million acres — about twice the size of South Carolina — is the amount of state trust lands concentrated in nine western states. That’s 87 percent of such lands remaining in the entire country.

The federal government granted these lands to states when they joined the Union to help them generate revenue, mainly for public schools. The land is often leased or sold for development, recreation, grazing, or gas, oil or mineral exploration. As the West’s economy increasingly relies on its natural amenities, some of this land is more valuable for conservation — of water, wildlife habitat and scenery, for example.

“Collaboration often takes longer, but because the strategies represent a shared vision, they are more likely to be implemented on the ground and actually make a difference.”

-Jennifer Parody, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and participant in the Southeast New Mexico Working Group collaborative process

The Sonoran Institute promotes modernized, collaborative trust-land management across the West through the State Trust Lands Project, a joint venture with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. With state and local groups in Whitefish, Montana, for example, the Project worked on a plan to guide real estate development and conservation use of state trust lands. The Project also is generating innovative ideas with government and community groups for the urban development of Superstition Vistas – a 275-square-mile tract of state trust land on the eastern edge of Phoenix, Arizona.

The Institute also works for reform in century-old trust land management. Despite aggressive, well-funded opposition by Phoenix homebuilders, Arizona voters last fall barely rejected comprehensive reform for management of the state’s 9.2 million acres of trust land. A hefty coalition of teachers, business leaders, outdoorsman, ranchers, elected officials and conservation advocates across the state supported the initiative.

“The close election was disappointing, yet the great strength of the campaign was our broad, committed coalition, and we will build on that momentum,” said Andy Laurenzi, director of the Sonoran Institute’s Land and Water Policy Program. “The opposition is swimming against the tide as more people recognize the economic and quality-of-life benefits of protecting the West’s land, recreational opportunities and other natural assets.”

Best practices and other information the State Trust Land Project gathers are shared with trust-land managers through publications, including a recent collection of case studies that feature collaborative planning, available at trustland.org.
New Map Guides Geotourists

When Kevin Dahl looks at the newly released Sonoran Desert Geotourism MapGuide, he sees more than just the hottest new destination.

Dahl, executive director of Tucson’s Native Seeds/SEARCH, sees the nonprofit seed bank’s inclusion on the map as a way to spread the word about protecting crop biodiversity and to celebrate cultural diversity through native seed distribution.

The MapGuide, created by a partnership of the National Geographic Society, the Sonoran Institute, Arizona Office of Tourism, Sonora Office of Tourism, and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, showcases more than 300 special places in the Sonoran Desert region. National Geographic defines geotourism as tourism that sustains or enhances the geographic character of a place.

“Being on the map is a tremendous opportunity to broaden support for small producers earning their living through traditional crops and food products. It can boost farm-to-market partnerships and demand for unique foods at local restaurants,” says Dahl. “It may also encourage more gardeners to cultivate seeds native to the American Southwest and northwest Mexico.”

People running restaurants, museums, natural areas, cultural attractions, ranches and other sites on the binational map are anticipating geotourism’s economic and conservation benefits. The expectation is that visitors’ appreciation of the distinctive character of the Sonoran Desert region will prompt visitors and locals alike to encourage conservation of natural and cultural assets and support sustainable enterprise.

Request a free copy of the map by email: joaquin@sonoran.org.
Thousands of volunteer hours and four years of work by engaged residents, officials and Sonoran Institute staff in Gallatin County, Montana, resulted in a 23,000-acre zoning district to protect open space and habitat in the Bozeman Pass area, a critical wildlife migration route to and from Yellowstone National Park.

The International Boundary and Water Commission adopted recommendations published by the Institute and several partners to guide restoration, policy and research in the Colorado River Delta region.


The Institute’s Northern Rockies office hosted a presentation and workshops in Bozeman in September featuring alternative-transportation advocate Dan Burden, executive director of Walkable Communities, who energized the crowd of 160 with his passion for making cities friendlier to people than cars through collaboration and design for people.

Backcountry Bounty: Hunters, Anglers and Prosperity in the American West, a report by the Sonoran Institute and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, was presented at the Western Governors’ Association conference in June. It shows that wildlife, and therefore hunters and anglers, depend on public lands, including roadless areas, and that hunting and fishing are a foundation for prosperity in many rural communities.

The Sonoran Institute’s biannual Building from the Best awards in Tucson celebrate design and development that respect the environment and the character of the community. Trophies were presented in March to judges’ choices for urban infill, green building, mixed use and five other categories. Building from the Best of the Northern Rockies will debut in Bozeman, Montana, spring 2007.

More than 1,100 acres were permanently protected via conservation easements in Arizona’s Sonoita Creek watershed, and a new conservation organization, La Semilla, was established to steward these lands.

Invasive plants at Tonto National Monument are being eradicated as a result of Sonoran Institute scientists’ work to monitor the health of natural resources in 11 National Park Service sites in the Sonoran Desert. They collect and analyze data to inform Park Service resource-management decisions.

In Montana, Sonoran Institute staff provided assistance in Ravalli County to pass a zoning ordinance restricting the size of big-box stores to protect downtown vitality in rural communities. In Missoula, the Institute collaborated with government, community groups and the developer to preserve 266 acres of a 286-acre parcel as open space along the Bitterroot River through conservation easements.
Donor Outspoken in Support of Institute

Chris Duerksen is not only a generous donor to the Sonoran Institute; he’s also generous with his praise. “The Sonoran Institute is doing the most important conservation and land-use work in the West,” he told community leaders attending the Big Sky or Big Sprawl conference in Helena, Montana, last fall. This is from a respected land-use attorney, with Clarion Associates of Denver, who works with cities and counties across the country on planning and growth-management strategies.

“The Sonoran Institute is doing the most important conservation and land-use work in the West.”

Chris Duerksen, Land-Use Attorney, Clarion Associates, Denver, Colorado

Duerksen has watched the Institute since its early days as founder Luther Propst built what Duerksen calls the only “multi-state institution that stands up for thoughtful land-use planning in the West.” “The Institute has educated an entire generation of planners and elected officials about sound growth management,” he says, referring to the Western Community Stewardship Forum, which has provided training for nearly 300 local officials from across the West. “The way the Sonoran Institute works is very impressive — putting out good publications, promoting conscientious development, and working with local officials, which is where things happen in the West,” Duerksen says. “The Institute gets its hands dirty and really helps.”

ANNOUNCING Sonoran Institute’s Hummingbird Society

The hummingbird ranges across the West from Mexico to the Northern Rockies, the same territory where the Sonoran Institute promotes collaborative conservation. The hummingbird is an important pollinator; the Institute helps communities to blossom.

Our new Hummingbird Society recognizes those who donate $1,000 or more to the Sonoran Institute. Society members receive a number of benefits, including invitations to special tours, preferred seating at Institute events, monthly e-mails about current activities, and a hand-crafted hummingbird lapel pin. Society members also have the satisfaction of knowing they are advancing the vision of a West where conservation and prosperity go hand-in-hand. Visit sonoran.org or call Angie at 520-290-0828 for more information.

Company respects culture, environment, history — and Institute’s values

Rio Development and The Gadsden Companies were created to meet and respond to the challenges of Rio Nuevo, a large area of downtown Tucson, Arizona, targeted for redevelopment. Building communities that reflect the region’s culture, history, and identity in an urban setting is their mission.

Rio Development’s Mercado District of Menlo Park is Rio Nuevo’s first major project and features residential, retail and office space, native landscaping, public spaces and design based in historical context.

To Rio Development’s Adam Weinstein these attributes dovetail with the values of the Sonoran Institute, which presents biannual awards for design and development that respect southern Arizona’s culture and environment. The company was the major sponsor of the Institute’s 2006 Building from the Best awards program.

As Tucson develops — and redevelops — an ongoing dialogue among all those involved is essential, says Weinstein. “I support the Sonoran Institute because it plays a vital role in guiding this dialogue and encouraging smart and sustainable growth.”
Revenues & Resources

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Source</th>
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*In addition, resources for FY 06 include $2,813,603 in multi-year grants carried forward from previous years and restricted for use in this and future fiscal years.*

Expenses

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<tr>
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www.sonoran.org

The Sonoran Institute's newly redesigned Web site was launched in January 2007. Please visit www.sonoran.org to learn more about the Institute, our partners and our collaborative conservation efforts in western North America.
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