



The Sonoran Institute promotes community decisions that respect the land & people of the West

## Workshop Empowers Energy Pioneers

In August the Golden City Council on Colorado's Front Range adopted sustainability goals in seven categories based on recommendations from working groups involving 60 local citizens.

A few peaks to the southwest, Gunnison County and local municipalities are considering a joint resolution outlining how they will move collaboratively toward a sustainable energy future.

In the mountains above Salt Lake City, several towns and Summit County are figuring out how to



*"In a shockingly small amount of time, we've done a lot."*

Golden Sustainability Initiative's Mark Heller, City of Golden, Colorado

piggyback on pioneering energy efficiency efforts by Park City.

Folks in Basalt, Colorado, were treated recently to a "Prius Parade" and free compact fluorescent bulbs, and a citizens' "Green Team" was supplemented by a similar group of local government employees.

Collaborative efforts among city and county governments are bearing fruit in Sun Valley/Hailey/Blaine County, Idaho, and in Jackson/Teton County, Wyoming.

These six communities also sent teams to the Sonoran Institute's inaugural Community Energy Futures Institute (CEFI) in June in Grand Junction, Colorado. Forty eager energy pioneers spent three days with nearly two dozen experts discussing how their communities can conserve energy, save money and implement sustainable practices, including use of alternative

energy. Team members learned about measuring progress, engaging businesses and other organizations, communicating effectively, implementing green building techniques and incorporating energy efficiency into land use and transportation planning.

Following the workshop, Park City Mayor Dana Williams said, "We came here with a city plan; we are leaving with a county-wide commitment."

CEFI gave "us a good shove through a stuck spot and some tools to move forward," said Sarah Mitchell of Teton County.

After Golden adopted its new goals, city staffer Mark Heller, who attended CEFI and coordinates the Golden Sustainability Initiative,



*Priuses and the Bio Bus parade as part of the "green" festivities at this summer's River Days in Basalt, Colorado. Basalt team members (bottom) brainstorm at the Sonoran Institute's community energy workshop in June.*

said the workshop was "enormously valuable."

"It encouraged the city's mayor to embrace the Initiative, and it taught us the wisdom of small steps and of working in an organized way," Heller said. "Yet, in a shockingly small amount of time, we've done a lot."

Resources from the CEFI program are available at [sonoran.org](http://sonoran.org).



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Friends,

In my travels around the West this summer, I saw the awe-inspiring and the awful. Seeing miles of mountainsides covered with reddish-brown lodgepole pines that have succumbed to beetle infestations is awful. Fortunately, much more is in the awe-inspiring category — the towering palisades and canyons straddling the border of southern Colorado and Utah along the Dolores River where I hiked on a brilliant June day, or the powerful windmills whirling along the Snowy Range and Elk Mountains of southern Wyoming.



Both the awful and the awe-inspiring motivate us at the Sonoran Institute. Rapid growth and poor planning fire up our policy-reform and training work. Windmills and solar arrays spark our energy initiatives. Quaint, rural towns, spectacular public lands, and wonderful rivers and wildlife nourish our efforts to help communities conserve their quality of life and natural assets.

We are in extra high gear now, putting our new strategic plan in motion. We've reorganized our programs and their leadership, we're opening a new office in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and we've formed teams to support our new regional legacy programs and West-wide work. We are sharpening our focus to ensure the best use of our time, skills, funding and passion to tackle challenges and seize opportunities across the West.

In this edition of WestWord, we revisit a community that has counted many successes since we helped it create a vision for its future 15 years ago. We also take a look at our first energy training for Western communities; review legislative successes we supported in 2007; and share the story and pictures of a float trip that broke through river-management gridlock.

All this work has at least one thing in common — it is aimed at reducing the awful and protecting and nurturing the awe-inspiring in our beloved West.

Handwritten signature of Luther Propst.

Luther Propst
Sonoran Institute
Executive Director

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# Revealing RIVER TRIP

A long stretch of Oregon's John Day River is designated Wild and Scenic and a State Scenic Waterway. It is a well-known bass fishery and excellent habitat for now-declining numbers of steelhead salmon. River trips pass by bighorn sheep, petroglyphs, columnar basalt walls and three Wilderness Study Areas.

With the John Day flowing through Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and private lands, management of the river is a challenge. Also in the mix are the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL), which manages the river's bed and banks. These agencies and counties along the river formed a Core Team that has met occasionally for many years. The Sonoran Institute began facilitating their meetings in 2007.

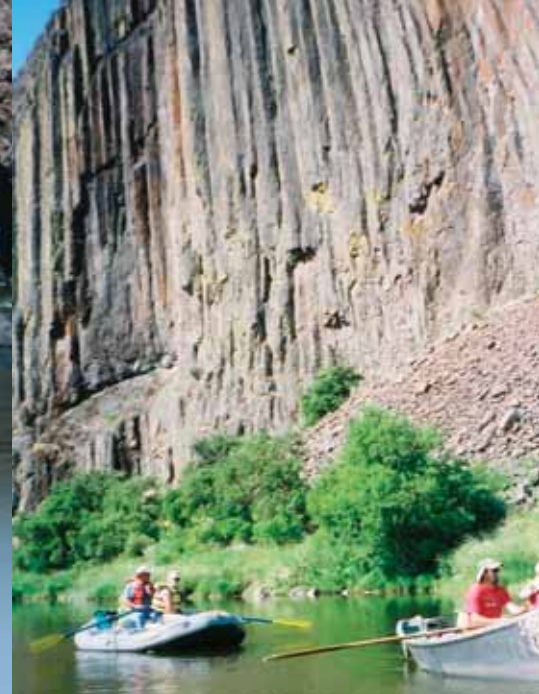
It wasn't a formal meeting, however, but a two-day float trip the Institute organized for Core Team members that created an opportunity for better stewardship of the second longest free-flowing river in the continental U.S.

While most of the agencies focus on recreation and wild and scenic values, the DSL's mission of free and open access to its land has meant no off-highway vehicle (OHV) restrictions and no rules on using portable toilets and removing human waste. Unrestricted OHV use spreads weeds, scares wildlife, collapses river banks, promotes erosion, and ruins archeological sites. BLM rangers reported 10 pickup trucks on a gravel bar in this Wild and Scenic River during the 2006 July Fourth holiday. Citizens and local governments have complained about failure to control such issues.

Floating on the river together, team members learned more about the DSL's mission, and the DSL agent got a better grasp of on-the-ground enforcement and management issues. DSL is now open to considering some OHV closures.

The Institute's John Day field coordinator Alex Phillips is optimistic that better communication among agencies is improving collaborative enforcement and management. Six agencies and local tribes are signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to coordinate the river's management and create a shared vision for its future.

"Bringing in the Sonoran Institute to help us all find common ground proved to be a great investment," said Christina Welch, district manager for the BLM in Prineville. "The Core Team was able to finally agree on the wording of the MOU, which had been in draft form for almost six years."





For several months last winter and spring, Tim Davis put on a coat and tie to go to work — not typical attire for Sonoran Institute staff. But Tim was spending long days in the Montana Statehouse advocating for eight smart-growth bills before the legislature.

## SMART GROWTH, WATER & ENERGY SCORE IN STATEHOUSES

His work — and wardrobe adjustment — paid off. Lawmakers passed seven of the bills (see sidebar). “We also stopped every bad land use bill,” says Tim, who directs the Institute’s *Montana Smart Growth Coalition* project in Helena. He vows to be back with the only major bill that did not pass, which would have created statewide river and stream setbacks and a clear process for local governments to adopt setbacks.

This effort in Montana’s 2007 legislative session is in sync with the Institute’s new strategic plan, which calls for increased promotion of smart growth and conservation policy at the state and federal levels.

Meanwhile in Arizona, dedicated and persistent Sonoran Institute staff members and partners played a major role in the passage of two bills that nudge the state toward a more sustainable future.

Only about 300 out of roughly 1,400 bills introduced in Arizona each year reach the governor’s desk for final approval. Diana Rhoades, Susan Culp and Eric Gorsegner of the Sonoran Institute worked diligently with Rep. Olivia Cajero Bedford (D-Tucson), Rep. Lucy Mason (R-Prescott), Sen. Jay Tibshraeny (R-Chandler), the City of Tucson, the Salt River Project, the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project and others to get House Bill 2638 to Governor Janet Napolitano, who signed it in May.

HB 2638 gives Arizona sustainable energy components as part of its planning for future growth. The law requires cities, towns and urban counties to provide incentives for the efficient use of energy and to identify policies and practices that support greater use of renewable energy.

Also, for the first time, Arizona expressly passed water management legislation to protect its rivers and streams. HB 2300 creates the Upper San Pedro Water District to maintain the flows of the San Pedro River while meeting the needs of local communities. It requires that future subdivisions are consistent with this goal.

This first step to improve rural water management in Arizona resulted from strong support and hard work by the Governor’s office in partnership with the Sonoran Institute, The Nature Conservancy of Arizona and the Grand Canyon Chapter of the Sierra Club Arizona. The Institute’s involvement was an outgrowth of our recent study, *Sustainable Water Management: Guidelines for Meeting the Needs of People and Nature in the Arid West*, which is available at [sonoran.org](http://sonoran.org).

### THE MONTANA SEVEN

The Sonoran Institute’s goal of reforming policy to support collaborative community conservation is exemplified by the successes in the 2007 Montana legislative session. These bills:

**1** create a smart growth planning process for cities and counties together to adopt zoning sensitive to wildlife, the environment, health and safety, and local services; give people more voice in growth management; and promote development where delivery of services is most efficient.

**2** require identification of wildland-urban interface areas and encourage protection of people and property from wildfire through state rules and incentives and local subdivision regulations.

**3** close a loophole that let condominium developers evade any review of the impact of hundreds of units on roads, services, neighboring property owners, or the environment.

**4** allow local governments to require parkland dedication for minor subdivisions.

**5 & 6** address an issue that has become a major source of mischief following a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision. Two related bills assure people that their homes are not at risk from the perceived abuse of eminent domain and ensure that inciting fear of eminent domain can no longer be used to undermine local land use planning and zoning.

**7** reorganize the affordable-housing loan account to better invest state dollars in such housing.



## COMMUNITY CONSERVATION: LESSONS FROM RED LODGE

The Sonoran Institute's community-based conservation work is enriched by lessons gleaned from its community partners. Some of these mentors are in Red Lodge, Montana, a town with a proud, multi-ethnic mining heritage that has gracefully made the transition to a bustling New West community. This didn't happen by accident.

Last June as the sun was setting behind the Beartooth Plateau, about 50 Red Lodge residents gathered to celebrate the formation of *The Beartooth Front Community Forum* 15 years earlier to the day and to honor founding member Merv Coleman who was stepping down that evening as the group's leader.

In the early 1990s, it was becoming apparent that the region's unique character and quality of life were threatened by dramatic growth. Quaint historic towns like Red Lodge, which boasts a



*"Seeing these community groups produce so much from a seed we planted is always satisfying and educational."*

Luther Propst, Executive Director, Sonoran Institute

ski hill, stunning public lands, and a major airport up the road in Billings, were especially vulnerable. Locals realized that if they didn't craft a vision for their future, someone else would.

At the time, the Sonoran Institute was starting work in the Northern Rockies, bringing together a cross-section of Jackson Hole, Wyoming, residents for a Successful Communities Workshop to identify what to protect, what to change and how to achieve those goals. Folks in Red Lodge heard about this process and wanted to give it a try.

The rest is history. Red Lodge's Successful Communities event produced a vision that has been sustained, enhanced, and largely realized thanks to *The Beartooth Front Community Forum*, which was created during the process. A new master plan endorsed walkability, historic preservation, main

street renovation, and repair of crumbling infrastructure. A Boys and Girls Club was built. Successful open space conservation efforts were launched. Concerted efforts thwarted unanticipated threats to the integrity of the community, such as the post office's proposed move out of the town center.

Red Lodge knows what it wants to be when it grows up — and its vision is ever evolving. Affordable housing is now a high priority of the Forum and the community.

Our elected officials often have the final say on how our communities grow. But informed and diligent citizens can significantly influence what officials decide. That's democracy. In its 15 years, the very democratic *Beartooth Front Community Forum* has had a tremendous influence on the still livable and lovable town of Red Lodge.

*"[The Institute's] initial efforts on behalf of Red Lodge have been paying dividends ever since. I'm happy that we are an example for you to use — I realize that the continuity had to be maintained locally, but without your startup help, we wouldn't be where we are."*

Brian Roat, Mayor, Red Lodge, Montana

### CITIZEN GROUPS PROMOTE GROWTH SOLUTIONS

With lessons learned from Red Lodge and *The Beartooth Front Community Forum*, the Sonoran Institute has helped create or fortify similar groups in the West. One of them, Madison Growth Solutions, successfully worked to strengthen the county land use plan in scenic Madison Valley, Montana. *Fremont Growth Solutions* has a similar goal in Fremont County, Idaho, and promotes public understanding of and engagement in growth issues.

A Sonoran Institute staff member led the Salmon Valley Stewardship for its first two years; SVS is now engaging citizens in the land use planning process for rural, but changing, Lemhi County, Idaho. In Canmore, Alberta, Canada, a similar organization created by the Sonoran Institute is now the independent *Chinook Institute*.



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## Sweets Good for the Planet

Thaddeus (Tad) and Carroll Sweet's long history of community engagement and action is grounded in their personal philosophies. "We believe we have an ethical responsibility to be part of the community and to take care of our planet," Tad says.

When they first encountered the Sonoran Institute, the Sweets were struck by the different approach it takes. "Now, we are committed to the Institute's tactics," Tad says. "That is, help people to help themselves by awakening and inspiring communities to work for their values and reshape a new culture around the new West."

Splitting their time between Island Park, Idaho, and Scappoose, Oregon, the Sweets were able to compare the land use and demographic changes in two states. Tad felt that Fremont County (Idaho) was lacking in its approach to growth and development and was concerned that locals were being taken advantage of.

A desire to increase awareness and knowledge about growth and planning motivated Tad to help form Fremont Growth Solutions in 2005. Carroll had formed, and served as president of, Island Park Advocates for Responsible Development in 2003. Both citizen-based organizations work to inform local residents about the issues and opportunities facing rural communities and to facilitate action for a new future. The Sweets' commitment is put into practice daily: "The best way to preach is to act."

As a financial business professional, Tad sees an incredible opportunity to make a difference. "My goal is to work with the nonprofit sector and raise conservation capital to benefit those here today and future generations. We made a personal commitment to title to the planet, based on our ethics and connection to this ecosystem. We believe there are others who share our values and want to leave a lasting, meaningful legacy."

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## AROUND THE WEST in a word

### *New Wyoming Project*

The Sonoran Institute's new *Partnership for Wyoming's Future* project got rolling in September with the hiring of its manager, Jim Whalen of Cheyenne. Jim will identify opportunities to improve growth management, transportation, and community development policies and lead policy reform efforts in the state. He was with the Wyoming Office of State Lands and Investments for 30 years, most recently as assistant director for real estate. Having worked with rural landowners, state and local officials, legislators, and the conservation community, Jim is known for bringing diverse interests together to achieve shared conservation goals.

### *Economics Answer Man*

How does open space or smart growth impact property values? What are the fiscal implications of various land uses? How does conservation contribute to prosperity? Economics is often part of the work to conserve land and other resources. Economist Joe Marlow, Ph.D., joined the Sonoran Institute last spring, bringing experience teaching at a tribal college, assessing the economic value of ecosystem services — clean air, water and riparian habitat, and exploring for minerals, oil and gas. He recently completed a real estate market course at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Joe's skills and knowledge enhance the Institute's socio-economic research and efforts to reform land and growth policies.

### *New Members Bringing Diverse Experience to Institute's Board*

The Sonoran Institute will soon welcome two new directors to its board. James M. Kaple, who has a doctorate in rehabilitation counseling from Michigan State University, will become a member in November. Now retired, he directed statistical, financing and coverage policy activities for drug abuse and mental health agencies at the National Institutes of Health. Jim has a long history of community service and is on the Dean's Board, College of Fine Arts at the University of Arizona.

Joseph P. Kalt, the Ford Foundation Professor of International Political Economy at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, will join the board in March 2008. He co-directs the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development. He holds a doctorate and a master's in economics from UCLA and a bachelor's from Stanford. Professor Kalt serves on the boards of Montana State University's Big Sky Institute, The Communications Institute, and the White Mountain Apache Tribe's Fort Apache Heritage Foundation.

The Sonoran Institute reluctantly accepted the resignations of Fred Borchardt and Gretchen Long. Bill Jack left the board after completing his term in June.



### *Artisan Housing Means Business*

The grand opening of Curley School Artisan Housing in May marked the first phase of an economic development strategy for Ajo, Arizona. Artisans rent the building's 30 spacious, affordable apartments and bring micro businesses to the community. The nonprofit International Sonoran Desert Alliance (ISDA) spearheaded the \$10 million restoration and conversion of the historic school. In the early 90s, the Sonoran Institute helped launch ISDA to work on preserving the environment, culture and economy of U.S., Mexican and tribal communities in the Sonoran Desert. The Curley School shows how much a small organization and scores of volunteers can accomplish. Learn more about ISDA at [isdanet.org](http://isdanet.org).

### *Restoring the River Delta*

Recommendations in a new Sonoran Institute report support restoration of the Colorado River Delta. A sensitive ecosystem less than 10 percent of its original size, the Delta remains a vital part of the Pacific Flyway as a crucial nesting and feeding area for more than 360 species of migratory and resident bird species. Rapid growth in the Southwest, competing demands for water and a prolonged drought have jeopardized the region's economy, agriculture, native cultures, fisheries, and wildlife.

The Delta could face extinction if U.S. and Mexican policymakers fail to act as partners to stabilize and restore it. The study urges them to:

1. Amend an international treaty so Mexico can participate in water banking and trading mechanisms proposed by the seven Basin states.
2. Dedicate a minimum base flow of water to the Delta and pulse flows every four years to restore riparian and estuarine habitat and mimic natural flow patterns.
3. Establish pilot programs to retire the region's marginal agricultural lands, conserving water for both human and environmental needs.
4. Intensify agricultural and urban water efficiency and conservation investments in the lower Colorado Basin states (Arizona, California and Nevada) and Mexico, based on best practices.





# Sonoran Institute

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## GALLATIN AREA PLANNING GRANTS SUPPORT SMARTER GROWTH

Eleven projects in four Montana counties are receiving Gallatin Area Planning (GAP) grants to help communities plan for and manage growth and protect their character, quality of life and natural assets. Initiated last spring, the grants range up to \$5,000 and are administered by the Sonoran Institute's Montana Smart Growth Coalition. Some of the GAP grants are helping:



- **Gallatin Grassroots Forum** – speaker series to address land use planning, transportation, sustainable development, citizen involvement in shaping their communities and more.
- **Madison Valley Ranchlands Group** – Water Summit to engage citizens with onsite lessons about water resources, demonstrate growth's impacts on these resources, and underscore the importance of a sound growth management plan.
- **Montana Heritage Commission** – comprehensive plan for the sustainable development of Virginia City and citizen outreach about the link between historic preservation and local economic health.
- **Madison County Housing Task Force** – identify priorities for a county-wide housing plan, conduct community outreach, and visit model affordable housing sites.
- **Park County Residents for Sound and Responsible Growth** – educate citizens about sound planning, creating development proposals that respect county laws and character, and a reasonable growth policy.
- **Sierra Club for Communities Co-existing with Wildlife** – educate residents in Gallatin and Park counties about safety in grizzly bear country and reduce wildlife-human conflicts.

Grants also have been awarded to the Ruby Watershed Council, Greater Gallatin Watershed Council, Big Hole Watershed Committee's Conference on Local Options for Floodplain Development Regulation, Park County Environmental Council, and Montana Watercourse. For more information contact the Montana Smart Growth Coalition at 406-449-6086 or [tdavis@sonoran.org](mailto:tdavis@sonoran.org).

