RUBY HABITAT FOUNDATION Annual Report 2013

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Dedicated to Innovative, Insightful, and Responsible Resource Management

Comments from the Executive Director

For me personally, one of the great pleasures of spring for the last eleven years has been the privilege to reflect in this letter upon the work of the Ruby Habitat Foundation. Each year, as I review our many accomplishments, I am humbled by the vision of our founder Craig Woodson and by the unwavering commitment of our Board of Directors to carry on the Foundation's mission. Every passing year brings exciting challenges and prospects along with enthusiastic new friends and generous long term supporters. The past year was another great one for the Ruby Habitat Foundation.

By its effort and with your support, the Ruby Habitat Foundation has become highly regarded for its exemplary conservation ethic. The far reaching implications of the projects we have undertaken will have an impact for generations to come. The Woodson Ranch property is an unparalleled showcase of possibilities for land owners large and small. Education, recreation, agriculture and wildlife coexist on the ranch in a sustainable fashion, a successful example of diversity of uses and habitats. Over the years, we have had the opportunity to



provide education and perspective on a wide variety of subjects to a wide variety of ranch visitors and we look forward to many more such opportunities. The activities featured in this report demonstrate what time, effort, creativity and an open mind can achieve.

Our association with the Montana Land Reliance continues to prove invaluable. Their encouragement and advice have contributed to the Foundation's success in no small measure. All of us at the Ruby Habitat Foundation are grateful to the Directors, the Board and the staff of the Montana Land Reliance for their support and assistance.

Please take time to review this year's Annual Report in depth. Once again, the talented Dr. Samuel Corl III has volunteered his creativity in assembling this summation. As you read it, revisit with us the highlights of the past year and consider our progress toward accomplishing our purposes.

On behalf of the Board of Directors I extend a heartfelt thank you for the support of our many friends over the years. We believe we are making a difference. There is however, much yet to achieve in our effort to preserve and enhance conservation values of this great area.

I hope you will choose to continue to partner with RHF as we strive to maintain the integrity of our western landscape and heritage.

Les Gilman Executive Director Ruby Habitat Foundation



Looking back on my first year with the foundation, I never predicted that at the crossing of our recreational interests, agricultural livelihoods, and conservation efforts, I would find a new definition of community. My position as the Guest Services Coordinator for the Ruby Habitat Foundation married well with my own

interests in local agriculture. I came to the job eager to learn about the projects the foundation was doing, enthusiastic to share it with others, and clueless about fly fishing. Meeting and talking with many of our supporters this year, exposed me to a result of the foundation's endeavors that I was unaware of. I find myself grateful and uplifted by the shared goals, values, and willingness of our supporters. I watched this collective

effort translate not only to the ranch's property boundaries, but journey all across our country to homes and communities far from here. This is how ideas travel, progress takes place, and people come together. As the year comes full circle and we approach another season on the Woodson Ranch, I look forward to learning more, sharing more, and finally learning to fly fish!

Sara Theis Guest Services Coordinator



Our new Guest Services Office, barely in the shadow of the iconic Woodson Ranch red barn, will be finished soon. Then you will have to look no further, to find Sara.

As I reflect back on 2013 at Ruby Habitat Foundation the Sandhill Cranes and the Red-wing Blackbirds have returned to the Ruby Valley and the stillness of winter has given way to the melody of the approaching spring. No green grass yet, only snow on the mountains stored for the approaching season, ready to fill the streams and river. They come with the expectation, the certainty, of a new season of life. It warms my heart to think of all the creatures that journey back to this unique mountain valley each year to spend a few months raising their young and living among us. They join together with all the wildlife that tough out the long winter and the animal community becomes complete as well as very busy. This is made possible by the diverse and well managed natural resources present in the Ruby Valley.



Thanks to the generosity and vision of Craig and Martha Woodson, Ruby Habitat Foundation has become a mainstay in the area, looking for ways to support agriculture, while enhancing the habitat for our wildlife

community. Wise use of our natural resources is so important to the long term viability of our society. This has given us the opportunity of providing education on a number of levels to visitors of Woodson Ranch. When visitors see the beauty of the ranch, the message of responsible resource management really soaks in. As we look forward, education will continue to be a high priority and I am confident the avenues will expand.

The partnership with the Montana Land Reliance (MLR) has proven to be one of mutual benefit. As we support MLR in their mission to protect the open space of Montana, it helps to give our voice a broader audience while increasing our understanding of just how big the job of conservation really is. As our world population grows we need to always be mindful that the acreage of land does not.

As the Sandhill Cranes that show up anticipating the season ahead, I have that same anticipation of what is ahead for Ruby Habitat Foundation; the future is full of opportunities. We will do our best to take advantage of each one, continuing to be a place of experimenting, learning and a steady voice for responsible stewardship. We are very appreciative of each supporter and I am hopeful each of you will continue to partner with us.

Neil Barnosky Chairman, Ruby Habitat Foundation

From the Board and staff of The Montana Land Reliance (MLR), we l would like to congratulate the Ruby Habitat Foundation on another great year. Those of us here at MLR who serve on the RHF Board, (George, Lois, and Rock) are pleased with all the changes and progress made over the past year. It was great to welcome new arrival Sara Theis, Guest Services Coordinator, to the RHF family and hear from guests at the ranch how she made their visits special. On the agricultural side, RHF continues to come up with ideas and projects that reflect the custom and culture of the Ruby Valley. I think Craig would be proud to see his vision being carried out as planned.

If you are a long time guest of the Woodson Ranch, RHF thanks for all your support. If you haven't had the opportunity to visit the ranch, please come by and take a look, catch a fish, or just watch all the flora and fauna.

The Montana Land Reliance is proud to be the parent organization for the Ruby Habitat Foundation.

Montana LAND RELIANCE

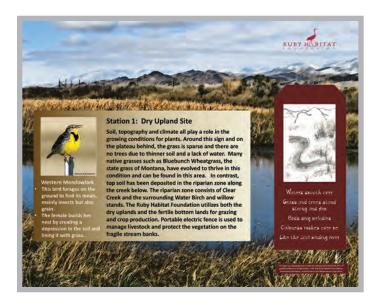
Rock Ringling Managing Director Montana Land Reliance





Helena Students Enhance Nature Trail with Poetry, Artwork, History, and More

On a May afternoon, as the sun began its daily decent over the western ridges of the Ruby Mountains, a group of inspiring young Helena High English students rolled under the Woodson Ranch archway to begin a two day field trip at the foundation's heart. Led by Julie Mitchell, an enthusiastic and accomplished English educator, the students were tasked to create interpretive signs for



the ranch's nature trail. Located on the northwest corner of the ranch, the trail weaves its way along the Clear Creek braid of the Ruby River. Finding inspiration on the ranch is not difficult; the students quickly became immersed in their surroundings, finding wildlife and agriculture on the same landscape, working toward a common goal of resource conservation and land stewardship while maintaining the agricultural heritage that the valley is known for.

Given the foundation's mission of a diverse, multiple use landscape, the students were directed to incorporate multiple cultures and meanings into their sign project. Each sign would feature an indigenous organism of some form, whether plant, mammal, invertebrate or bird. The sign would also include an explanation or narrative relative to the site location. To challenge

their creativity further, the students were asked to include a Japanese "Waka" poem and a Japanese "Sumi-e" ink brush painting. Japanese Waka are short poems

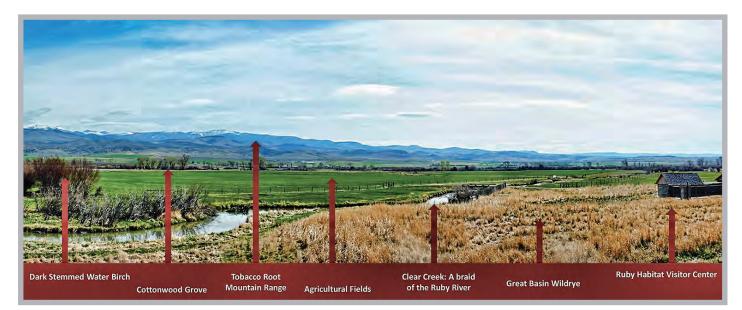
designed to capture the emotion of the natural environment. Similarly, the Sumi-e style of ink brush paintings are simple paintings that are styled to capture the essence or emotion of a scene rather than the details of the features.

Executive Director, Les Gilman, and Natural Resource Specialist, Logan Miller kicked off the visit with a guided tour of the nature trail. As the weekend progressed, the students spent time learning, listening to guest speakers, exploring the ranch, taking

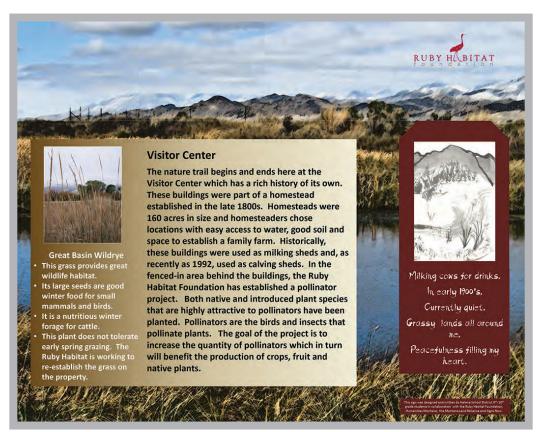


Martha Woodson at the Visitor Center

photographs, writing poetry, painting, and discussing options for the different sign elements. Upon returning to Helena they put their heads together, collaborating amongst themselves to develop eleven total signs for nine different sign locations. The end result is a tremendous enhancement to the foundation's nature trail, which is open to the public most of the year and can now truly fulfill its purposes of education, relaxation and inspiration. We hope you will take the opportunity to visit the nature trail and enjoy the talent and insight that the signs exhibit.



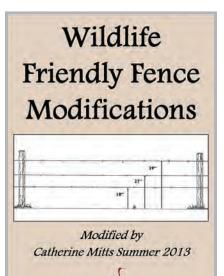
This is a sample of the nine "station" signs created by the students from Helena High School for the interactive Nature Trail on the Woodson Ranch. Their amazingly professional contribution to the outreach goals of the Foundation adds to the understandings of young and old alike about the diverse beauty of the setting, and the interrelationships among elements of the ecology of the Ruby Valley.



Wildlife Friendly Fencing

For decades the barbed wire fence has been the staple within ranching communities as the primary structure to either contain or exclude livestock on the landscape. Though effective for its intended purpose, the impact of a traditional barbed wire fence on wildlife movement can be significant. On the Woodson ranch there is a minimum amount of permanent barbed wire fence. However, to facilitate the ranch's rotational grazing program, a barbed wire fence was installed in the early 1990's. When initially installed, the fence that bisects the ranch from north to south was constructed as a traditional five strand, barbed wire fence. During the summer of 2013, one of our seasonal ranch employees, Catherine Mitts, was assigned the task of modifying the existing fence to make it "wildlife friendly".

Following a design developed by various wildlife agency managers, it was determined that the fence could be modified by completely removing the top and bottom strands of wire, resulting in a three wire fence. The wire that then became the top wire was raised up to a maximum height of 39" to accommodate easy passage by large ungulates such as white-tailed deer and moose, which are the two most abundant species on the ranch. The 39" height will still act as a deterrent to most livestock. Additionally, the spacing between the top wire and the second wire was set at not less than 12". This spacing greatly reduces the risk that wildlife will become entangled in the fence if they miscalculate as they jump. The new bottom wire is now 18" off of the ground to accommodate the movement of wildlife unable to jump the fence. A summer of pulling staples, spooling wire, and adjusting wire spacing, has resulted in a fence modification that is effective for livestock management while accommodating wildlife movement. For Catherine, her resulting scratches, bruises and sore muscles were a testament to the good work she was accomplishing.



RUBY HABITAT

Soil Health Update 2013



Cover crop cocktails (here peas and turnips) attempt to mimic nature by increasing plant diversity in farmed soil ecosystems.

Tools for Building Soil

Last summer we continued to experiment with cover crops and no-till farming on 45 acres of sprinkler irrigated land on the Woodson Ranch. This 5 year trial is intended to increase local knowledge of progressive farming technologies that are receiving national attention for restoring soil and reducing farming costs. No-till farming is the practice of using herbicide, machinery, or livestock to terminate crops, and then seeding directly into the soil without plowing or otherwise disturbing the ground. Limiting soil disturbance preserves soil structure and organic matter, which has implications for future nutrient mineralization, infiltration, and water holding capacity. No-till also reduces tractor time, fuel costs and labor.

Cover crop cocktails are diverse mixtures of annual crop species that are chosen to meet predetermined needs of the land and land manager. Cover crop cocktails are complimentary to no-till and can be used as a tool for building organic matter, improving soil structure, fixing nitrogen, breaking up compaction, fighting pests, and attracting pollinators. 2013 presented weed and weather challenges in

the trial plots, but we continued to harvest valuable information for local producers.

New Lab Test Quantifies Soil Health

This year we worked with the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) in Temple Texas to take a deeper look at soil nutrients. Traditional soil tests quantify currently available soil nutrients to make fertilizer recommendations. While an important first step, these tests only paint part of the nutrient picture and often overlook the value of soil biota. Healthy soils are teaming with life and therefore represent a large pool of organic "slow-release" nutrients. Dr. Rick Haney and others have developed a new soil test that helps quantify this organic pool and evaluate the nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium that will be available during the growing season.

"A thing is right only when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the community, and the community includes the soil, waters, fauna, and flora, as well as people." -Aldo Leopold

This work supports assertions by soil building farmers that they have reduced their need for commercial fertilizer despite large input recommendations from traditional tests. The results of our first sample are shown below. The numbers are a little confusing, in part since fertilizer was already applied to some plots. The high level of nutrients in the cover crop plot is very encouraging, and validates the use of this practice for building soil. We will continue to evaluate nutrient trends in coming years.



Arvika Forage Peas planted at 50 lbs/acre along with 50 lbs of hay barley or triticale, have made excellent hay on Woodson Ranch.

Five Things We Have Learned So Far . . .

No-Till Requires Patience as crops tend to come on slower than conventionally planted fields, likely due to cooler soil temperatures and less of a nitrogen "bump" from tillage operations. Although not as quick out of the gates, no-till yields can still match conventional fields and they cost less to produce.

Forage Peas are a great first step to increasing diversity in cropping systems. They have grown well at the Woodson's when mixed with hay barley, triticale and in the cover crop. Peas fix free nitrogen, make good hay and attract pollinators.

Radishes Volunteer Readily and could potentially become weedy if allowed to go to seed. This year we found radishes in the new alfalfa planting. It is not a concern since it will be hayed, preventing any more seed production, but some folks might not want it in their annual crops.

High Carbon Species are needed to keep the soil covered in winter. The cover crop mixes have decayed so fast (and been eaten by so many deer) that there is too much bare ground come spring. Increasing high carbon species like oats, wheat and corn can help keep the soil covered.

Warm Season Species such as millet and sorghum/sudangrass are great for the soil but can be limited by our short growing season. They have done well 2 out of 3 years but maturity is not guaranteed due to early frost. When successful, they make great cattle forage and excellent food and cover for birds.

^{*} Aldo Leopold "The Ecological Conscience." Lecture delivered June 27, 1947 to the Conservation Committee of the Garden Club of America, published later in the club's *Bulletin* and reprinted in Susan L. Flader and J. Baird Callicott, eds. *The River of the Mother of God; and other essays by Aldo Leopold,* The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991, page 345.

Organic Matter Critical for Drought Management

No-till grain sprouts in an old

hay field near Twin Bridges, MT

Whether it is El Nino, Climate Change, the Pacific Decadal Oscillation, or just some oddball weather, agriculture is often at the mercy of mother nature, and she seems a little unpredictable lately. It just makes sense to do everything we can to improve resilience to increasingly erratic weather, and building soil organic matter is likely the best place to start.

OM is closely tied to soil's water holding capacity. Therefore, high levels of organic matter provide a buffer against drought in pasture, hayfields and rangeland. Studies have shown a 1% increase in organic matter will allow the soil to hold an additional 3 gallons of water per cubic yard, or over 15,000 gal/acre (Jones, 2010). This is because stable forms of soil carbon, such as humus, can hold 7 times their weight in water. Organic matter and biological processes are also responsible for building or maintaining soil structure that allows for water to infiltrate into the profile rather than running down "...a 1% increase in organic matter will allow the soil to hold an additional 3 gallons of water per cubic yard, or over 15,000 gallons per acre." **

the creek. For these, and many other benefits, make sure building organic matter is part of your farm or ranch management plan.

Is Soil Health Catching On?

RHF Soil Health outreach efforts have reached a large number of agricultural producers in the valley and across the state. Although difficult to quantify, we are confident that our experience has helped encourage folks to try new farming methods. Over the past few years we have seen a dramatic increase in no-till farming throughout Madison County, often with excellent results. Equally encouraging, is the increase in awareness regarding soil health principles. No doubt, this is due in part to the work done at the Woodson Ranch Soil Health trial site. We expect that if we are able to continue to demonstrate the economic benefits of soil health practices in a five year rotation, more people will give them a try.



No-till turnips in grain stubble near Sheridan, MT

	N lbs/acre	P205 lbs/acre	K20 lbs/acre	Nutrient value/ acre
No Fertilizer				
Cover Crop-2 years	83.72	20.29	121.16	\$ 137.13
No Till Barley/Peas-2 years	56.78	13.88	66.82	\$ 83.88
No Till Barley 2 years	58.48	15.86	97.60	\$ 104.69
Conventionallly Tilled Barley-2 years	46.30	16.79	94.51	\$ 96.24
With Conventional Fertilizer				
Existing Hay	37.94	16.97	46.54	\$ 62.57
Cover Crop-2 years	107.12	32.64	89.57	\$ 140.86
No Till Barley/Peas-2 years	91.25	25.29	66.56	\$ 112.39
No Till Barley-2 years	99.73	23.83	66.43	\$116.38
Conventionally Tilled Barley-2 years	116.71	34.83	78.52	\$141.51

2013 ARS Soil Test Results From the Woodson Ranch

^{**} Jones, Christine E. (2006). Soil carbon means water to me. Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA and Grain & Graze 'Practical clues for pasture cropping' workshops. 'Malgarai' 27 Feb, 'Gowrie' 28 Feb and 'Kyabra' 1 March 2006.

A Fertilizer Trial

The first year of a five year comparison between the uses of commercial fertilizer, no fertilizer, and a microbial additive on an existing alfalfa/grass hay stand.

In the late winter of 2012 the management team at Ruby Habitat Foundation found itself putting together the annual plan of operations for the coming year. When it came time to budget for fertilizer on the agricultural fields on the Woodson Ranch we once again wondered if it made financial sense to make the investment in commercial fertilizer. An existing project, the soil health study, has been showing results that would suggest that commercial fertilizer may not always pay when looking at the net income per acre. The cost of fertilizer has never been higher and it is one of the most substantial costs in any farm/ranch budget. The question is: With the application of fertilizer, does the increase in production offset the cost of the fertilizer and the associated application costs? In addition, are their other ways to maintain or increase yields without the use of traditional commercial fertilizers?



Fertilizer Trial: Applying Microbial 2013

As you will read elsewhere in this report, we are currently in the middle of a five year study on soil health in partnership with the local office of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). In that trial, we have placed a strong emphasis on building soil health by conducting such practices as no-till drilling, leaving crop residue, and planting soil health cover crops or cocktails. Through that trial we have become aware of products that claim to lessen a crops dependence on fertilizer by feeding or supplementing the soil microbes. The product we chose to use for our fertilizer trial claims that by using their product a producer can expect the following:

- Decreased input costs by reducing the amount of commercial fertilizer needed.
- Improved water efficiency and moisture holding capacity resulting in decreased watering needs.
- □ Increased nutritional benefits from plants and forages.
- Improved animal performance when consuming resulting forages.
- Healthier, hardier plants more resistant to environmental stresses like transplant, extreme temperatures, and drought.
- Improved soil fertility and tilth.
- Increased absorption of fertilizer inputs by plants
- Balanced soil pH thereby making nutrients more available to the plants.

To conduct our trial, we selected a 15 acre field that is currently planted to a grass/alfalfa hay mix. It has one soil type and is uniformly irrigated by a wheel line sprinkler system. We broke the field down into three, five acre plots; one each for the commercial fertilizer, the microbial product and the no fertilizer control. We then applied the recommended rates of both the commercial fertilizer and the microbial product. The site was regularly irrigated throughout the growing season. Our intent was to compare the inputs, yields, and net revenue from each plot. On July 2nd NRCS and ranch staff took clippings from each plot. Samples were taken randomly using 2 sq. ft frames. After air drying the samples, they were weighed to determine total biomass. The results were as follows:

Plot	Av. Grams	Lbs./Acre	Tons/Acre	Product \$/Acre
Microbial	140	6751	3.4	\$20.00
Fertilizer	131	6290	3.1	\$46.42
Control	120	5762	2.9	\$00.00

After the first year, our results suggest that the microbial product increased our yield from the control plot by .5 ton/acre. The initial results also show that the fertilized plot had a .2 ton/acre increase over the control. Over the next four years we will replicate this process and monitor our results, publishing them in our annual reports.

There is an increasing interest in microbial products and their success locally. It is our intent to provide an unbiased study for the benefit of local producers and help determine if indeed microbial products will lessen the dependence on commercial fertilizer when applied to a hay stand.

Ruby Habitat Foundation 2013 Financials

Foundation Operations:			
	Income	\$162,597	
	Expenses	\$89,344	
	Net Income	\$73,253	
General Fund Cash & Inve (Pays the day-to-da	\$85,741		
	le funding for outreach and la	nd conservation efforts. te the balance of this account.)	\$200,609
	endowment finances conservat	ion education and outreach s come from designated gifts.)	\$35,518
Visitor Center Building and Office Cabin:			\$68,391
Foundation Operations Assets as of 12-31-13			\$390,259
Woodson Ranch & Endow	ment:		
	Income	\$710,126	
	Expenses	\$228,848	
	Net Income	\$481,278	
Fi	xed Assets		
Improvements and Equipment			\$641,081
Land			\$7,312,500 ¹
Woodson Ranch Endowment			\$5,602,237 ²
Ranch & Endowment Assets as of 12-31-13			\$13,555,818

¹Restricted land donation subject to life estate

²The income from Woodson Ranch Endowment is used for the operation and maintenance of the Ranch, to ensure its protection and continued viability.

Ruby Habitat Foundation Combined Total:

Net Income 2013	\$554,531
Total Assets as of 12-31-13	\$13,946,077

RHF is a 509(a)(3) tax-exempt support organization to the Montana Land Reliance, a 501(c)(3) corporation. Our Tax identification number is 45-0487621. Each entity is audited annually and independently. Audit copies are available upon request.



These people and organizations contributed significantly to the vision and the work of the Ruby Habitat Foundation in 2013. Our gratitude is genuine, but inadequate for the measure of their loyalty and support.

Chris Adamo Diane & Michael Alexander Joseph Anderson Kim & John Andrews Nancy L. Bailey Gloria & Neil Barnosky Dr. Laurie & Dr. R. T. Bartoletti Elizabeth & James Barton Diana & Richard Beattie Laura & Gerald Bellotti MD Susan & Bill Belobraidich Anne & Alex Bernhardt Jane Birckhead Lila M. Bishop Allen Bjergo Grace L. Blair MD Glenn Brackett Jean & David T. Brandos Michele & William Brennick **Dorothy Brown** Linda Hale Bucklin Shelly & Steve Burke Austen Cargill Kurt Carlson John Carpenter Eric R. Carson Wayne Cherry Martha Christman Michele & Robert Christofferson John W. Clark Mark Cockrill R. Brooks Corl Samuel Corl III Evie & Dr. R. Reynolds Cowles Jr. George Cox Janet & William Crandall Cheryl & John Dale Gary W. Dietrich Eric S. Dobkin Barbara C. & Thomas E. Donnelley II Nancy Dyke J. & Gayle Eidson Dave Eldrich Carol & Mark Engebretson Janet & John Ethen Robert B. Evans Jr. Sherrie & Richard Fast Doris L. Fischer William R. Fraser Barbara & Michael Gettelman Nick Gilardoni Donna & Les Gilman Carolyn Lakewold & Fredrick M. Goldberg Mr. & Mrs. Bruce C. Gottwald Rita & Richard Graff John Green Dennis Grundman Leslie & Nick Hanauer Paulette & Frank Hardy

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In Memoriam Wayne Gilman Dick Lower Craig Woodson



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Mission Statement

The Ruby Habitat Foundation is dedicated to preserving and enhancing the natural resources, and social and economic makeup of the Ruby Valley and southwest Montana by, among other things:

- Supporting agriculture in the community and the diversification of agricultural operations to ensure the long-term viability of working ranches;
- Working with landowners, educational institutions, foundations, and other entities to protect and enhance open space and wildlife habitat;
- Encouraging education and training to broaden the understanding of resource management issues, and responsible management of private lands;
- Promoting the concept of resource accountability and developing examples of minimal impact resource management for agricultural and recreational uses while protecting the environment.

"Landowners and resource managers are inherently bound to a high level of resource accountability. We are bound by law to protect the environment and prevent resource degradation, but we have a higher obligation to be good stewards of our natural resources, sharing them today and preserving them for future generations. The decisions we make and the actions we take affect our own environment as well as that of the wildlife, our neighbors and future generations."

Charles Craig Woodson, Founder, 1933-2011

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