



MONTANA  
**FRESHWATER  
PARTNERS**

**2024  
IMPACT  
REPORT**

# A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Creating Connection on the Yellowstone

2024 has been a year of hard work, community-building, and connection. As we continue our rigorous and impactful restoration projects on the ground across the state, we're also upping our focus in our own backyard more than ever to continue the ripple effect in the place we call home.

The Yellowstone River runs less than a half mile from our office doors, and this year we've taken even more steps to engage our local community in the watershed that benefits all of us. We've worked with community members, state agencies, and other groups in our area, lectured in classrooms, and spearheaded volunteer events.

To give but a small sampling of the work underway, we received a \$300,000 WaterSMART grant to work with partner organizations to increase the pace and scale of on-the-ground restoration work on the Yellowstone and its tributaries. We partnered to update the Upper Yellowstone Channel Migration Map between Gardiner and Springdale to map where the river has moved in the past and where it is likely to move in the future. And we've spearheaded volunteer efforts at new, impressive scales: More than 165 community members donated

their time this year to help restore native riparian vegetation to properties impacted by 2022's historic flood and clean up the river corridor as it sees unprecedented recreation traffic. We've even helped a beaver conflict program find footing in our region.

Montana Freshwater Partners stands for community-building and healthy aquatic ecosystems. Now more than ever, we're stepping up to make our impact not just across the state, but in the shared spaces where we all live and recreate.

As we continue to mobilize our neighbors and roll up our sleeves to conserve the longest free-flowing river in the lower 48 states, we want to ask our loyal supporters to help us continue to build on this momentum, and take our efforts to the next level.

For the love of water,



A stylized, handwritten signature in dark blue ink that reads "Wendy Weaver".

Wendy Weaver, Executive Director





Cover Photo courtesy of: Chris Boyer, Kestrel Aerial | Photo courtesy of Scott Johnson

YELLOWSTONE HIGHLIGHTS

“

I was inspired by Montana Freshwater Partners' work and left with a head full of ideas on how we might gently raise the water tables while creating a more diversified riparian habitat on our land.

- Wilsall Farmer, Shields Watershed Tour

Photo courtesy of Wendy Weaver





## HOW WE GIVE BACK TO THE YELLOWSTONE

Our work along the Yellowstone has two main goals; to improve habitat and help ecosystems thrive, and to enhance the resilience of communities and people living near the river. We are working to accomplish these goals in the following ways:

### RESTORATION

As we continue working hard to identify and implement impactful restoration projects throughout the Upper Yellowstone Watershed, we're already getting started on the ground. This year we led the restoration of over 2 miles of Flathead Creek in the Shields Valley, and engaged volunteers to revegetate the banks of the Yellowstone on two properties that were severely impacted by the 2022 flood.

### WATERSHED RESILLIENCE

Being prepared for future floods and other natural hazards is crucial to living sustainably with wild rivers. To help prepare our community for our always changing ecosystem, we updated 86 miles of the Yellowstone River Channel Migration Zone Map which highlights areas along the river likely to experience erosion and

movement over time. Through community meetings and events, we made sure landowners and local policymakers were well-versed in the significance and use of this vital planning tool.

### COMMUNITY BUILDING

In 2024 MFP engaged a record number of community members from youth, to MSU students, to local government officials through our education and outreach efforts. 165 volunteers donated over a 1000 hours to plant willows along the river, install beaver dam analogs, and clean trash out of the Yellowstone. We also held community meetings, guest-lectured for MSU and master naturalist classes, and hosted community events like our annual River Cleanup, Native Plant Sale and River Hootenanny.

YELLOWSTONE HIGHLIGHTS



Photo courtesy of: Connor Parrish



## PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

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### **BEAVER CONFLICT RESOLUTION PARTNERSHIP**

Beavers are native ecosystem engineers. To help promote their beneficial impacts, we've been working over the past 2 years with the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, and other groups to expand the Montana Beaver Conflict Resolution Program to Southwest Montana. This summer, we had a NWF technician who worked out of our office to provide tools and resources to landowners experiencing beaver conflicts. He responded to 24 conflicts and implemented 10 projects.

### **PARK CO. WATER INITIATIVE**

In July, we received a \$300,000 WaterSMART grant from the Bureau of Reclamation to increase the pace and scale of on-the-ground restoration on the Yellowstone River and its tributaries. We'll be working over the next three years with state, local, and nonprofit partners to identify and implement projects that will increase ecosystem health and build resilience to our changing natural and human landscape.

### **YELLOWSTONE RIVER CLEANUP**

In July, we teamed up with the Joe Brooks Trout Unlimited chapter to clean up the Yellowstone River. With the help from 99 volunteers and 13 local sponsors, we collected a whopping 1.12 tons of debris (that's 2,240 pounds!) from the river.

### **YELLOWSTONE SAFE PASSAGES**

Highway 89, the stretch of road between Livingston and Gardiner, is one of the deadliest stretches of pavement for wildlife in the state. Undersized stream crossings also sever connectivity to several key tributaries of the Upper Yellowstone River. To help solve the problem, we're working with Yellowstone Safe Passages on creative solutions for stream health and fish passage at priority locations.

### **SHIELDS RIVER WATERSHED TOUR**

In September, we teamed up with Trout Unlimited to host the first-ever watershed tour with a diverse group of over 20 people and visited three projects in different stages in the restoration process (pre- and post-restoration).

## PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

# OUR IMPACT IN CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION ACROSS MONTANA

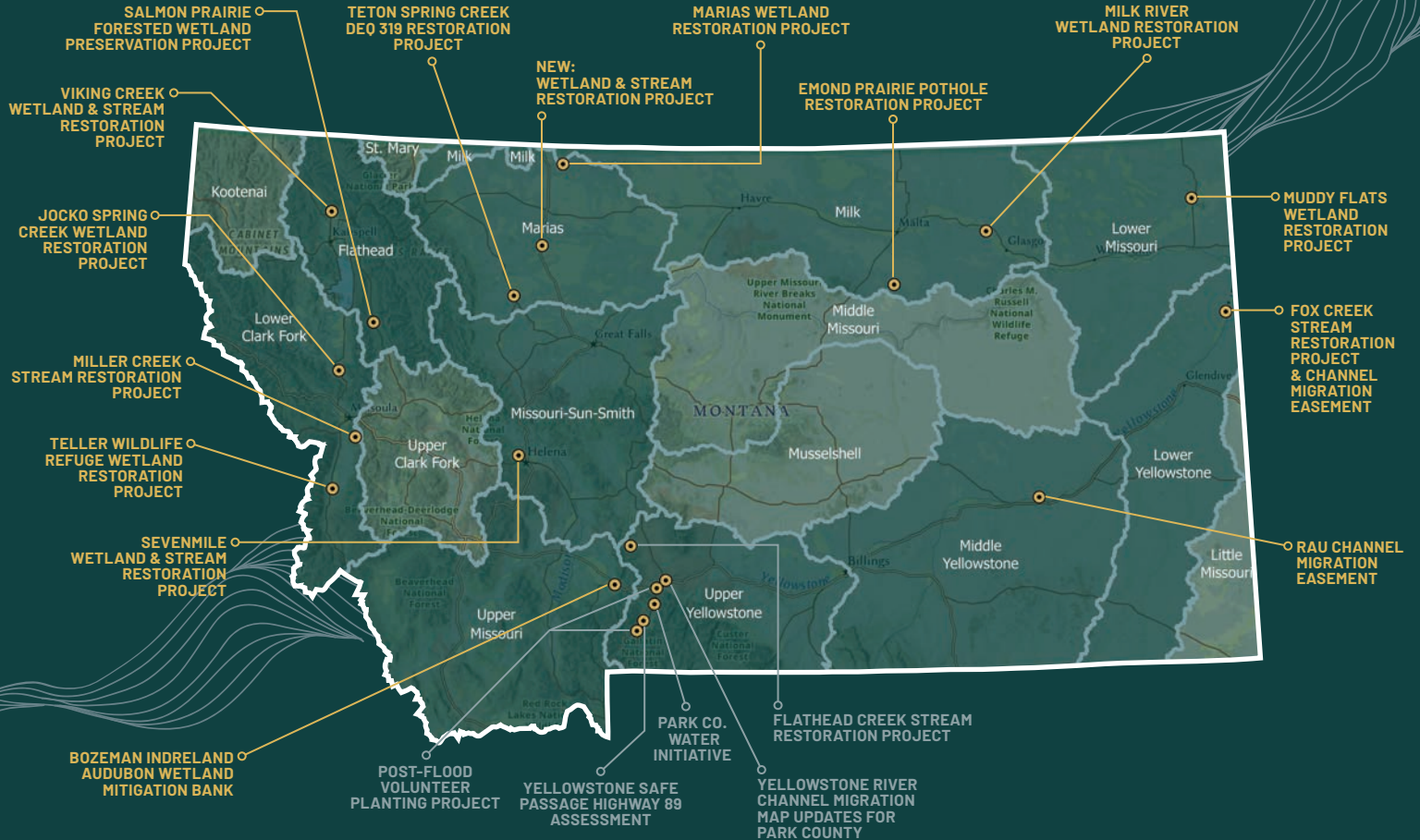
MFP has been working diligently across Montana for over a decade to ensure no-net-loss of wetlands and streams under the Clean Water Act. We're doing this locally through our restoration and conservation efforts in the Upper Yellowstone Watershed, and we're also working state-wide through our wetland and stream mitigation program. Our organization operates the state's only in-lieu fee (ILF) wetland and stream mitigation program where we work to offset impacts to streams and wetlands in the same watershed. Our partners include land trusts, Tribes, state natural resource agencies, ag producers and other private landowners, watershed groups and NGOs.

Photo courtesy of: John Roseberry

[freshwaterpartners.org](http://freshwaterpartners.org)



## PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS



METRICS

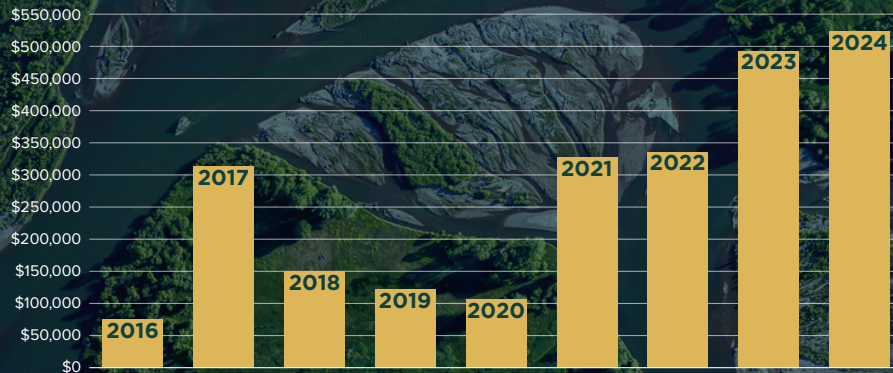
**483** Acres of wetland and riparian habitat protected/restored

**1082** Volunteer hours

**5.61** Miles (30,412 feet) of stream/river protected/restored

As of October 31, 2024

\$ Invested in Montanas Restoration Economy



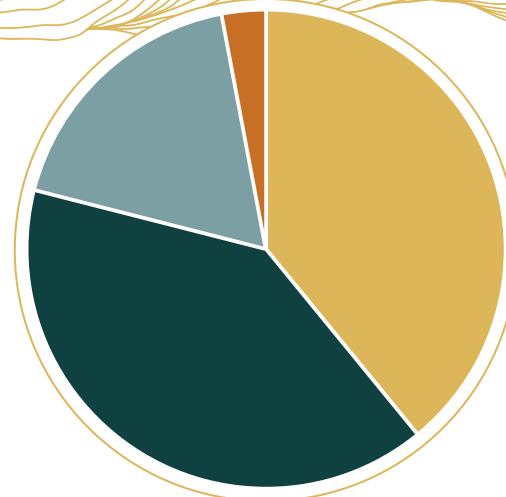
# FINANCIALS

Through October 31, 2024



## REVENUE

In Lieu Fee*	\$399,141
Program Income & Restricted Grants	\$340,082
Grants (unrestricted)	\$35,000
Contributions & Fundraising	\$61,586
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$835,810</b>



## EXPENSES

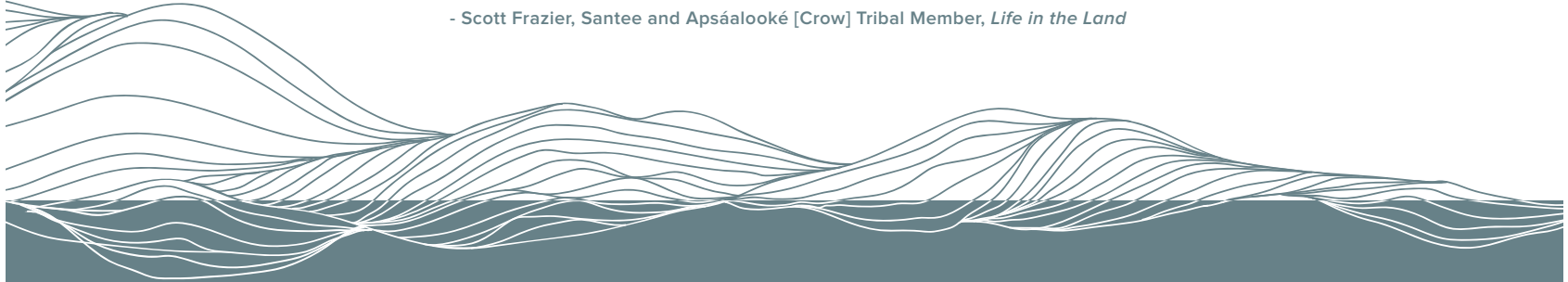
In Lieu Fee*	\$270,509
Programs & Contracted Services	\$274,697
Operations	\$120,973
Fundraising	\$23,879
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$690,058</b>

\*In-Lieu Fee wetland and stream mitigation program

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**When you start seeing the river in your heart instead of your head, you'll understand how this works and how we work.**

- Scott Frazier, Santee and Apsáalooké [Crow] Tribal Member, *Life in the Land*



## OUR TEAM

### STAFF

Wendy Weaver, *Executive Director*  
Jeannette Blank, *ILF Program Director*  
Leah Swartz, *Project Manager*  
Ashton Bunce, *Project Manager*  
Halle Nienhaus, *Project Manager*  
Ellen Conley, *Finance Manager*  
KynsLee Scott, *Digital & Communications Contractor*  
Alecia Jongeward, *Give Back to the Yellowstone Coordinator*

### BOARD

Marcus Pearson  
Sarah Zuzulock  
Amir Darabi-Noferesti  
Kascie Herron  
Tom Parker  
Elizabeth Fairbank  
Will Peete

### TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Karin Boyd  
Pedro Marques  
Matt Barnes  
Ryan Richardson  
Megan Ahern



Photo courtesy of Austin Trayser

# LIFE IN THE LAND

Connecting People and Place in Montana

## THE UPPER YELLOWSTONE RIVER

a film from Stories for Action



**Stories for Action**  
Sparking connection. Inspiring engagement.

A film about how local voices and the river itself can guide the work for greater resiliency of people and place.

[www.lifeintheland.org/upperyellowstoneriver](http://www.lifeintheland.org/upperyellowstoneriver)

## WAYS TO GIVE BACK



**ONE-TIME DONATION** Every contribution to Freshwater Partners powers our work to restore, enhance, and preserve Montana's aquatic ecosystems and water resources.



**MONTHLY GIVING** Set-up a monthly donation to protect Montana's water resources year-round.



### TAX-ADVANTAGE QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DONATION

There are a number of tax-advantage ways to give, including donating all or some of your IRA required minimum distribution, or donating non-cash assets to a qualified 501(c)(3) organization like Montana Freshwater Partners. These options can reduce your tax burden while also benefiting Montana's water resources for years to come.



To learn more about making a tax-deductible contribution or making a planned gift, **scan code** or contact Wendy at [wwever@freshwaterpartners.org](mailto:wwever@freshwaterpartners.org).

Montana Freshwater Partners is a registered 501(c)(3) organization, EIN #45-2804436. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

## THANK YOU

Our work and impact could not be possible without the generous support of those who donate financially to our organization.

Thank you to all the individuals, businesses, partner organizations, and foundations that make our work possible, with special thanks to the following organizations and businesses for their generous support.

Arthur M. Blank Foundation  
Great Plains Fish Habitat Partnership  
Simms  
Park County Community Foundation  
Four Corners Foundation

Sacajawea Audubon Society  
Defenders of Wildlife  
American Bank  
Pine Creek Lodge  
Yellowstone Wood Boat Tours



## OUR MISSION

To restore, enhance and protect Montana's rivers, streams, and wetlands through science-based innovative programs that benefit our communities and the landscapes we live in.

## OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Healthy and resilient aquatic ecosystems—  
today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.

## 2025 EVENTS

### NATIVE PLANT SALE

Pre-order plants online  
from February 1 - April 15 at:  
[freshwaterpartners.org/  
mfp-native-plant-sale](https://freshwaterpartners.org/mfp-native-plant-sale)  
Plant Pick-up and Sale Day: May 10

### YELLOWSTONE RIVER HOOTENANNY

July 17, 2025

### GIVE A HOOT

July 1-31, 2025

### YELLOWSTONE RIVER CLEANUP

September 2025

### UPPER YELLOWSTONE WATERSHED TOUR

September 2025

For more information on our  
upcoming events, please visit:  
[freshwaterpartners.org](https://freshwaterpartners.org)



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PO Box 338, Livingston, MT 59047 | [freshwaterpartners.org](http://freshwaterpartners.org)  