

FALL/WINTER TIDINGS



PHOTO BY DIRK BAKER - MOUNTAIN TINKER

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Bear River
LAND CONSERVANCY

A Message From **THE BOARD**

Property rights are fundamental to political and economic freedom in the United States, allowing wide participation in the shaping of our communities. Land Trusts exist to provide a mechanism to apply the principles of private property ownership to preserve natural areas and working lands. As communities build and grow, we can continue to preserve valuable natural habitat, maintain peaceful open space and nourish agricultural production.

In 2009, a 455-acre parcel of open space along the Bear River containing marshes, floodplains and fields was placed into a land preservation agreement with the Bridgerland Audubon Society by PacifiCorp. Two years later, the Bear River Land Conservancy (BRLC) was created to take over stewardship and management of the property, which came to be known as Bear River Bottoms.

Since then, BRLC has worked to conserve and enhance private lands for wildlife habitat, working farms and ranches, land and trails of recreational or historical significance, watersheds, and critical vistas. We work with our partners to use conservation easements and sound management to benefit the people of northern Utah, today and in perpetuity.

Today we steward 487 acres, including two additional properties with unique conservation values. And we are just getting started.

With the support of landowners, community members, volunteers and conservation partners, we are proud to be part of preserving the health and beauty of Northern Utah for generations to come. We welcome you to learn more by visiting our website or joining us at a volunteer field day, and share with us what you value about open space in Northern Utah. ■



PHOTO BY DIRK BARKER

Employee Highlight

GABRIEL MURRAY

Operations Director

In this new role, Gabe coordinates and leads the efforts of staff, board members, and volunteers as BRLC grows and builds on conservation efforts in the Bear River Watershed.

Gabe grew up exploring and adventuring on Alaska's Kenai Peninsula where he developed a deep appreciation for watersheds and open spaces. After graduating with a degree in Environmental Engineering from Northern Arizona University, Gabe took a position in Bozeman Montana with Confluence Consulting.



While working on river and wetland restoration projects in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming, he recognized that private lands present one of the most significant opportunities for conservation. Throughout his career, Gabe has worked with farmers and ranchers, conservation districts, government agencies, local municipalities, non-government organizations, and universities on a wide variety of projects including riparian restoration, weed management, soil health, irrigation, grazing management, and nutrient management planning.

Over the past few years, Gabe has enjoyed working with many producers in Cache Valley and plans to continue supporting agriculture and natural resources in his new role with the Bear River Land Conservancy. When Gabe is not working, you can find him exploring in the mountains of the Bear River Watershed, fishing in alpine lakes and streams, gauging the snow pack on skis, and floating down the Bear River. ■

Cache County OPEN SPACE BOND

What We've Been Working On

Gabriel Murray and Steve Daniels

Open space means many different things to different people. For some, open space represents a heritage, legacy, sense of place, and way of life. For others, open space provides the critical habitat for flora and fauna they care deeply about. Still for some, open spaces provide opportunities to explore and recreate. However, no matter what open space means to you, we all care about and want to preserve open space in Northern Utah.



For these reasons, BRLC members and staff have worked closely with the Cache County Open Space Committee to provide voters the opportunity to support an Open Space Bond. Through our combined efforts and with the support of the community, an Open Space Bond has been passed for the first time in Cache County's history. The incredible public support of the Open Space Bond demonstrates a shared recognition for the irreplaceable value of open space.

With your support, we are stepping into a new era for land protection in Cache County. As we move forward, we anticipate that the County Council and new Open Lands Board will be looking to Bear River Land Conservancy for technical assistance and participation in the preservation of open space. We need your support now more than ever, to bring this incredible opportunity to fruition and save the wonderful open spaces of Cache Valley. ■

PARTNERSHIPS

Accomplishing More Together

Gabriel Murray

Partnerships are key for success in all realms of conservation. As population growth and development pressure continue to increase throughout Northern Utah, we have also experienced a significant increase in the demand for conservation easements. Over the past year, we've restructured our organization, brought on new staff, and established several key partnerships that will help us meet this increasing demand and put more conservation projects on the ground.



PHOTO FROM KELLY BRADBURY

In Box Elder County, we have partnered with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Heart of the Rockies initiative to pursue a conservation easement that will protect a large area of critical wetland habitat for migratory birds and other species.

We have also partnered with Trout Unlimited, Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust, and Intermountain West Joint Venture to pursue conservation funding for the Bear River Watershed from the Natural Resource Conservation Service's Regional Conservation Partnership Program. With shifting climatic conditions and exponential growth throughout the watershed, it will be critical to increase our conservation goals and partnerships.

Finally, as we continue to grow as an organization, we have sought the guidance of larger organizations such as Summit Land Conservancy to assist us with easements and advocacy. Conservation simply cannot happen without the support of conservation partners and we are incredibly grateful for our supporters and partners. ■



STEWARDSHIP

PHOTO BY KELLY BRADBURY

Gabriel Murray

Stewardship is a critical component of what land conservation organizations do. From annual monitoring of our easements to the management of our properties, it has been a busy year. Earlier this spring, our volunteers planted over 200 Willow poles and removed truckloads of Dyers Woad from our Bear River Bottoms Property. They have also continued to control invasive species and enhance the habitat and scenic beauty of the property this summer. In addition to weed management and plantings, we partnered with the Utah Grazing Improvement Program and Utah State University Extension to create a rotational grazing management program on a portion of the Bear River Bottoms. After a site visit with our partners earlier this fall, we are encouraged by the benefits of the program and hope to continue to use grazing as a management tool on a portion of this property.

Mendon Meadows is another well known property owned and managed by BRLC. This year in addition to our annual Ute Ladies'-tresses monitoring and in an effort to enhance plant biodiversity and ecosystem resilience in northern Utah, BRLC established a pollinator garden space at the Mendon Meadows Preserve. We are excited to be a partner and participating in the newly established Utah Pollinator Habitat Program with the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food. As participants, we were awarded over 300 wetland and upland pollinator plants plus seed mixes.

In Mid-September volunteers from the community and USU's Society for Ecological Restoration Great Basin Student Chapter came out to create a new space and put the plants in the ground. As we continue to tend and develop this habitat, we aim to increase public awareness about the importance of land conservation in the protection of pollinator species. ■

Field Notes

MENDON MEADOWS

Another dry summer, but the orchids live on

Mark Brunson

Utah's multi-year drought continues to reduce flower production for Ute Ladies'-tresses at BRLC's Mendon Meadow Preserve, but 2022 was a distinct improvement over the previous year. The volunteers who weekly monitor and map the rare *Spiranthes diluvialis* orchids during late summer found 64 flowering individuals in 2022 - still one of our lowest counts, but 2½ times as many as we counted in 2021.

Mendon Meadow, a 30-acre parcel on the west side of Cache Valley, includes 11 acres of pastureland that supports a healthy population of Ute Ladies'-tresses, listed as a Threatened species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Springtime snow melt, a high water table, and summer irrigation have helped to support the orchids, which prefer wet environments (but not too wet). For the second year in a row, the canal that feeds the property wasn't flowing enough to provide reliable irrigation. However, monsoon rains in late July and early August seem to have helped the plants bloom and produce seeds for the next generation of orchids.

Although the 2022 flower count is well below the hundreds we've seen in wetter years, there's little cause for concern just yet. Ute Ladies'-tresses are unusual in that they can enter into a dormant stage, lurking at or beneath the soil surface as little more than a root system, until conditions are right for flowering. There likely are hundreds of orchids-in-waiting at Mendon Meadow, giving us reason to hope for a timely return to wetter conditions. ■



PHOTOS BY DIRK BAKER

Support Our Work

As we approach the season of giving and gratitude, we would like to encourage you to consider supporting the Bear River Land Conservancy.

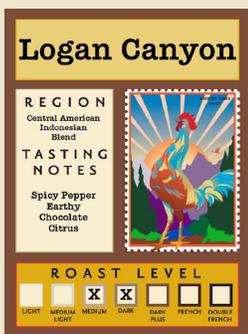
If you value the legacy and benefits of working farms, wildlife habitat, and open space in Box Elder, Cache, and Rich Counties, please consider supporting our work using one or more of the options below.



One-Time or Recurring Donations - As the population continues to grow in Box Elder, Rich and Cache counties, our mission to “preserve the benefits of land and water in Northern Utah and the Bear River Watershed for present and future generations...By partnering with communities and landowners to permanently sustain the heritage of working lands and protect natural areas” is more critical than ever. If you feel the work BRLC is doing is important, please consider becoming a one-time or recurring donor.



Tax Planning - Did you know that Bear River Land Conservancy is a 501(c)(3), not-for-profit organization? This means we qualify as a “public charity” and all donations to BRLC are tax deductible. As you begin your tax planning, please remember Bear River Land Conservancy.



Amazon Smile - If you make any purchases through Amazon.com, you have the opportunity to support the Bear River Land Conservancy with every dollar you spend! After selecting a non-profit charity, each purchase made through Amazon Smile will give 0.05% to the selected organization. This adds up over time and greatly benefits our organization.

Logan Canyon - Did you know that our friends at Caffe Ibis give a portion of the sale of every Logan Canyon blend to the Bear River Land Conservancy each year? Not only will you get to enjoy a nice cup of delicious coffee, but you’ll also be directly supporting local conservation efforts.

Other ways to support us - Join our email list, tell your friends and family about our work, follow and share our posts on social media or come out and volunteer with us!

To learn more, visit our website www.bearriverlandconservancy.org

