GROW WILD

Habitat Owners Association

2025

Project Background and Ecological Context

Grow Wild's Habitat Owners (HOA) Project supports the long-term ecological function of shared open spaces within Big Sky's homeowner associations by addressing invasive species, improving native plant communities, and promoting informed land stewardship.

These HOA-managed lands form an important component of the broader landscape matrix, providing wildlife habitat, connectivity, and ecosystem services that are increasingly vulnerable to development pressure. Now in its twelfth year, the program emphasizes sustained management, landowner education, and measurable ecological outcomes.

"Restoring land is about restoring relationships — with place, with community, and with the living world."

— Robin Wall Kimmerer

Project Scope and Cumulative Outcomes (2014–2025)

Over the program's **12-year history** (**2014–2025**), management activities have focused on the early detection and control of priority invasive species, reducing competition with native vegetation and limiting further spread into adjacent natural areas.

Collectively, these efforts have generated an estimated **$101,277 in value** to participating HOAs, reflecting avoided management costs, reduced future treatment needs, and increased capacity for ongoing maintenance.

76 landowners

248 hours

319 acres treated

747 lbs of weeds pulled

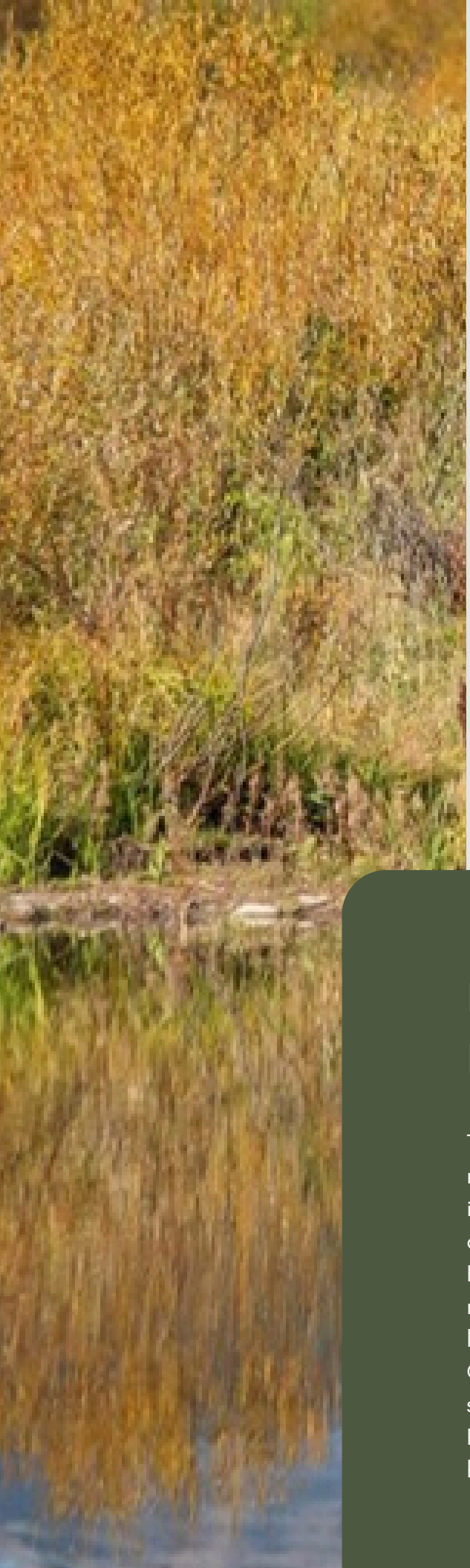
Savannah Rose Photography

2025 Project Activities and Maintenance Efforts

In 2025, project activities focused on maintaining previously treated areas rather than expanding into new HOA-managed land. Three landowners contributed **nine hours of stewardship** on **three acres** of HOA open space.

Treatment was deliberately planned for **late summer/early fall** to accommodate a lower water table. Fall noxious weed treatment is often highly effective because many invasive plants are moving nutrients into their root systems at this time, allowing for stronger long-term control and reduced regrowth the following season. Conditions on treatment day—no wind, full sun, and warm fall temperatures—proved ideal and resulted in very effective application.

While modest in scale, this maintenance work is critical to protecting prior investments. Consistent follow-up treatments **prevent reinfestation**, **support native plant recovery**, and **reduce long-term labor and chemical inputs**. The continued durability of earlier treatments across HOA open spaces demonstrates the cumulative value of sustained, low-intensity management.



Landowner Capacity Building and Adaptive Stewardship

Throughout the program's history, **technical assistance** and **landowner education** have been central components. Earlier phases of the HOA Project focused on intensive weed removal and awareness-building. Over time, participating HOAs have developed greater ecological literacy, enabling landowners to recognize invasive species, understand site-specific limitations, and implement management practices that align with local ecological conditions. This shift from reactive treatment to proactive stewardship has strengthened the resilience of HOA landscapes and reduced reliance on external intervention.

Integration with Broader Restoration Initiatives

The ecological principles guiding the HOA Project are also reflected in concurrent community-scale restoration efforts, including the Huntley-Kern Pond restoration, which has been an active focus in 2025. Although not formally part of the HOA Project, the restoration shares common goals: restoring natural hydrology, improving habitat function, and reducing long-term ecological risk through strategic intervention. Completion of the project's first phase—hydrologic separation of the pond from the West Fork of the Gallatin River—marks a significant step toward improving aquatic habitat and water quality.

Long-Term Outcomes and Program Significance

As the HOA Project enters its thirteenth year, its outcomes illustrate the effectiveness of long-term, landowner-driven conservation. Incremental, science-informed management across multiple years has improved habitat condition, increased stewardship capacity, and reinforced the role of HOA open spaces as functional ecological assets within the Big Sky landscape.

Acknowledgments and Gratitude

Grow Wild thanks the landowners, homeowner associations, partners, and funders whose collaboration supports the Habitat Owners Association Project. Their shared commitment to long-term, science-informed stewardship enables measurable ecological outcomes and helps ensure HOA open spaces continue to function as valuable habitat and community assets across the Big Sky landscape.

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BIG SKY OWNERS ASSOCIATION