

2020 Annual Report



The 2020 Challenge

Now more than ever, we turn to the outdoors for respite and relief, when doing so, are reminded of how important these places are. The pandemic altered many of our plans and events, but much like the ecosystems we work to protect, the Alliance found ways to adapt and persevere.

Essential Work

Conservation doesn't just happen. It's a commitment made by the collective and requires a long-term vision and ongoing investment to yield results.

Our Mission

The Alliance works to protect natural resources from the threats of invasive species. We do this to ensure that the places we love are not destroyed by our pursuit to experience them.

Inspire - Educate - Conserve



Community Feedback



For the past 16 years, the Alliance has been educating and assisting landowners in managing invasive plants on their property. This year we conducted a survey and here's what we found.

72%

Consider invasive species a threat to Big Sky's natural resources.

83%

Think wildlife are affected by the presence of noxious weeds.

87%

Link invasive species spread to recreational activities.

97%

Of landowners the Alliance has assisted actively manage noxious weeds on their land.

92%

Are aware that aquatic invasive species pose a threat to the Gallatin River.

14%

Feel that this community does enough to address the threats of invasive species.

A few comments from those we helped



"Jennifer was amazing, this free service is outstanding. I cannot say enough about how incredible it is that we have this free resource at our fingertips. Wish other homeowners in Big Sky realized what is available to them and would utilize it. Some owners just don't seem to care about noxious weeds. We do - thank you for all you do!!"

"Continue to educate, educate, educate! We have lots of new people moving here now. I don't think there is nearly enough being done to ensure people know the extent of the problem and/or their personal responsibility to maintaining their property."

"The Alliance is such a valuable resource. Their help has let us become more independent and educated in how to address invasive species in our property and in the neighborhood."

"Beyond diagnosing problems and outlining solutions, Jen provides a spectrum of options to consider and the respective pros and cons of each. The result is a comprehensive strategy for managing noxious weeds, along with promoting desirable native plants. With each visit over the years, she monitors my progress and identifies new priorities in my quest for a beautiful, healthy native landscape."

Environmental Stewardship Program



The Alliance works with local, state and federal partners to conserve and improve critical wildlife habitat in the upper Gallatin Watershed.



BIGHORN SHEEP HABITAT

2020 marks 10 years of managing invasive plants to improve critical winter range for our local herd of bighorn sheep.

For every \$1 we've invested in this project, our 5 partners have matched it with \$8.21, for a total of \$133,409.



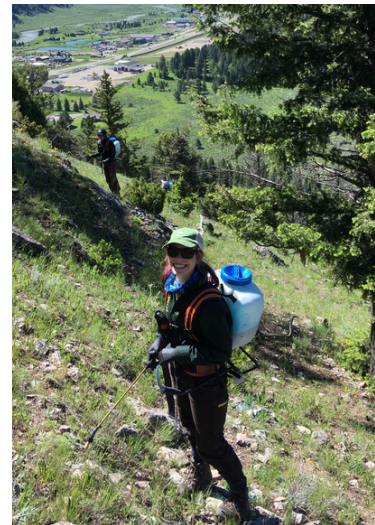
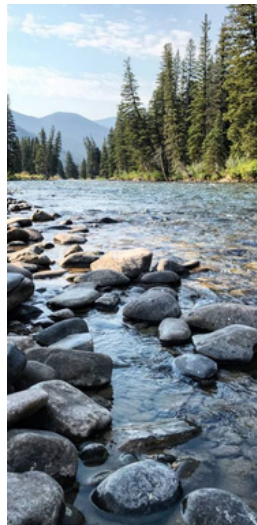
CONSERVE OUR CANYON

130 acres of heavily used river access trails, recreation sites, trail heads, and restoration sites in the Gallatin Canyon were treated for invasive plants in 2020.

Custer Gallatin National Forest and Montana Conservation Corps have been our partners in this effort since 2010.



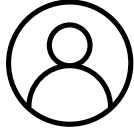
Invasive plants like spotted knapweed and houndstongue are known as "habitat transformers" because they change the physical structure and forage availability in habitats, eventually pushing resident wildlife out.



Environmental Stewardship Program



The Alliance provides landowners with the tools and resources to address invasive plants using best management practices and adaptive management strategies.



LANDOWNER ASSISTANCE

In 2020, the Alliance inspected 83 properties with 434 acres, educating landowners on best practices for managing invasive plant species. Since 2008, we've helped 844 landowners and 10,523 acres!



HOA PROGRAM (HABITAT OWNERS ASSOCIATION)

We partnered with the Gallatin County Weed District to help 2 HOAs enhance wildlife habitat in open space for 3 years. The effort included 54 landowners, 497 lbs of weeds pulled, and a treatment value of \$10,130.



"Thank you so much for what you do and helping the Antler Ridge community control invasive weeds in our area. This is extremely important and we are grateful for your service."



Education & Awareness Program



The Alliance implements activities and strategies that educate the public about invasive species and their impact on natural areas.



Recreationists are one agent for the spread of invasive species, both by land and by water.



3 TRAIL HEAD SIGNS & PCG KITS FOR KIDS

Three more signs were installed at local trails in 2020, bringing our total to seven.

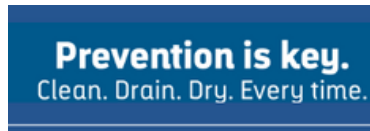
At our fall 2nd grade invasive species field trip, kids were given clean recreation kits that included a t-shirt and were encouraged to draw how they "PlayCleanGo in Big Sky."



4,257,000 IMPRESSIONS

Our billboards, media promotions, & articles encouraging the adoption of clean river recreation habits reached a large audience.

Since 2017 the Alliance has partnered with Gallatin River Task Force and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to mitigate the spread of aquatic invasive species.



Remove mud, water, and vegetation from your gear and clean with water and a stiff brush. There is no need for chemicals.

Drain any water from your equipment (including bait buckets) at your access point. Use a sponge for items that can't be drained.

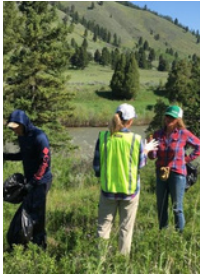
Dry your equipment thoroughly. The longer you keep your waders and other equipment outside and in the hot sun between trips, the better.



Community Outreach Program



The Alliance engages and informs the community about invasive species and their impact on the ecosystem through our events and programs.



1,279 LBS OF NOXIOUS WEEDS

68 volunteers pulled almost 19 pounds each at our 2 annual community weed pulls. Since 2008, we've removed 19,179 lbs of noxious weeds from public lands!



43 OPHIR SCHOOL STUDENTS

Motivated teachers arranged to host our 13th annual invasive species field trip despite all the challenges. The Alliance educated students at 4 stations with games galore! Students learned about clean recreation practices, weed and wildflower identification, aquatic invasive species, and what they can do to protect the places they love.



75 HUNTERS

The Alliance educated hunters in 3 One Montana's Master Hunter classes, increasing awareness about invasive species.

Crail Gardens



In 2019, the Alliance built a demonstration garden at Crail Ranch using native plants that are wildlife friendly, water wise, and help to preserve the historic landscape.



Plant Choice Matters

Native plants are the foundation of the ecological food web. Research indicates that when a landscape dips below 80% native plants, the reproduction rate of birds begins to drop. Because animals directly or indirectly depend on plants for their food and cover, the diversity of animals in a particular habitat is very closely linked to the diversity of the plants in that habitat.

Grow Wild

Once established, native plants are easy to maintain because they are adapted to Montana's temperatures, rainfall patterns, and soil conditions. Most importantly, native plants are the foundation for the food web and vital for sustaining ecosystems.

In 2020

17 volunteers worked for 47 hours in the garden and:

- Built & placed 3 Aldo Leopold benches: 2 large benches made of yellow cedar & a kid's bench made from russian olive wood (an invasive tree species)
- Planted 115 more wildflowers & 12 more species
- Completed rock perimeter around a native grass area
- Installed slate flower identification signs
- Constructed a noxious weed identification planter
- Hosted Montana Outdoor Science School Master Naturalists
- Held our inaugural Noxious Weed Bouquet Contest

Event Spotlight: Noxious Weed Bouquet Contest

As the pandemic abruptly shut down most of our education and community events for 2020, we decided to try something we have been thinking about for a while – a noxious weed bouquet contest. After figuring out how to host the event safely and creating contest rules, we partnered with the Arts Council of Big Sky, Hungry Moose Market and Deli, and the Historic Crail Ranch to see if this community might be interested in something completely unique. And that they were!



Forty people showed up at Crail Gardens, braving the pending threat of thunderstorms, to enter their carefully crafted noxious weed bouquets. With seventeen official entries to assess, the judges had a tough job evaluating the unique creations.



"Stop the Spread"

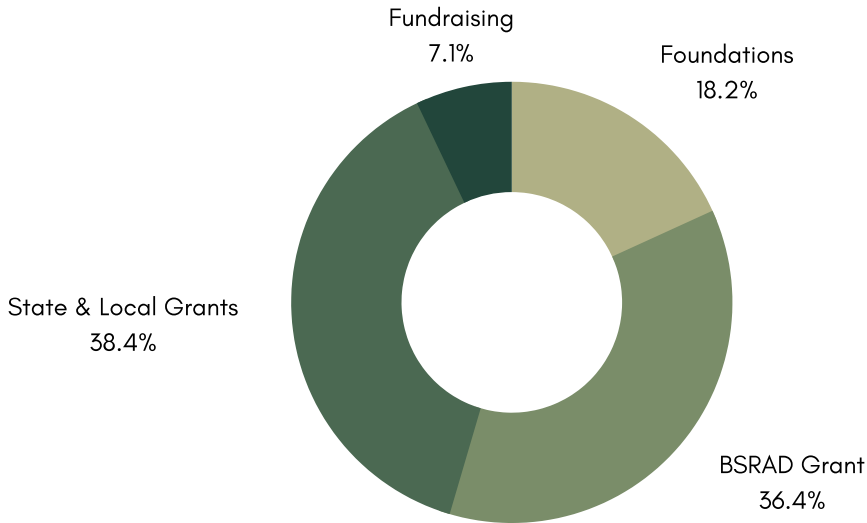
The event was covered by Jana Bounds of the Lone Peak Lookout, who wrote: Oxeye daisy, musk thistle, and spotted knapweed took starring roles in many of the bouquets. Those behind one contest entry became particularly creative with a bouquet titled "Stop the Spread," in which googly eyes and masks were placed atop musk thistle. In fitting with current events, a COVID-19 theme entry was titled "Coronanoxious ubiquitous: Weeds observed during social-distance hikes in Big Sky. Mask up...or push up Oxeye Daisies!"



We were beyond thrilled with the interest in the event and astounded by the creativity of contestants. The feedback we got, that it was so much fun and should be held again next year, was just what we hoped it would be! We look forward to hosting an annual noxious weed bouquet contest at the garden as another fun and creative way to educate people about noxious weeds and inspire them to "stop the spread".

REVENUE BY SOURCE

Total Revenue \$116,247*



*Includes funds obtained for the next five years of our Conserve Our Canyon project.

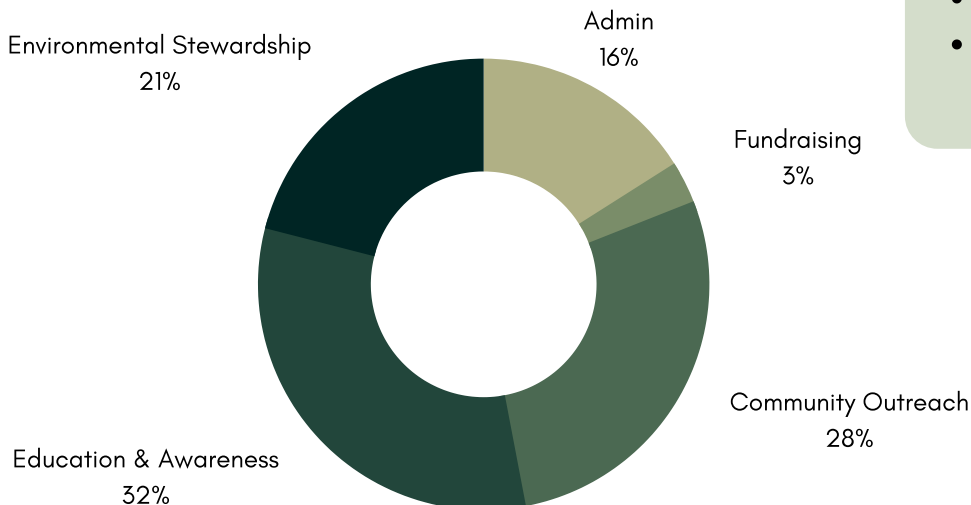
Thank you

to the 104 volunteers who put in 245 hours to better our community!



EXPENSES BY PROGRAM

Total Expenses \$100,227



Not included in the revenue or expenses are:

- \$59,154 of In-Kind donations
- \$8.30 average project match to every \$1 of resort tax grant funding

The Gallatin Invasive Species Alliance is a 501c3 Charitable Nonprofit. Donations are tax-deductible and our Tax ID # is 46-5544351

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*Thank you to our
partners, funders, and donors for helping us
inspire, educate, and conserve!*



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