



**GROW  
WILD**

**STRATEGIC PLAN | 2026-2030**

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# Organizational Profile and History

## Mission

To conserve native species in the Upper Gallatin Watershed through education, habitat restoration, and collaborative land stewardship.

## Vision

Functional and healthy ecosystems sustained by an informed and engaged community.

## Our Values

- Sustainable, functioning ecosystems
- Responsible and engaged land stewardship
- An educated and involved community
- Growing a conservation ethos
- A commitment to future generations

## Our Goals

1. Maintain a sustainable organization.
2. Facilitate ecologically based invasive species management on private and public lands.
3. Educate residents, visitors, and youth about invasive species, native species and our ecosystem.
4. Advocate for healthy native ecosystems to support both the ecological and economic well-being of our community.
5. Promote “clean recreational habits” to interrupt recreational pathways of introduction and spread of invasive species.
6. Conserve and improve wildlife habitat.
7. Restore biodiversity.
8. Partner with the community to coordinate invasive species management and native species conservation.





## Our Story

Grow Wild traces its roots back to 2004, when a group of concerned citizens and agency personnel came together to confront the rapid spread of invasive species in Gallatin Canyon. Originally known as the Gallatin/Big Sky Noxious Weed Committee, the group operated under the nonprofit Northern Rocky Mountain RC&D (Resources, Conservation, and Development). When that parent organization dissolved in 2014, the committee established its own 501(c)(3) nonprofit, the Gallatin/Big Sky Weed Committee.

As our mission grew to include all invasive species taxa—terrestrial and aquatic—we rebranded in 2017 as the Gallatin Invasive Species Alliance. In 2022, we adopted the name Grow Wild, a reflection of our broadened focus and our positive, hopeful vision for the future of native landscapes.

Three of our founding members—Don McAndrew, John Councilman, and Larry Holzworth—remain actively involved today, a testament to their enduring commitment to sustainable land stewardship.

What began as a grassroots effort to battle invasive weeds has grown into a comprehensive conservation initiative throughout the Gallatin Watershed. While invasive species management remains a core part of our work, Grow Wild is now a driving force in restoring native ecosystems and promoting biodiversity.

We conserve native plant communities and create habitat through the care and cultivation of native and pollinator gardens. We enhance wildlife habitat through targeted noxious weed control and collaborative research with Montana State University and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

We empower landowners to be responsible stewards of the land and bring communities together through hands-on restoration efforts, including local weed pulls. We advocate for clean recreation practices, helping outdoor enthusiasts understand how their actions affect the landscape—and how small changes can make a big difference.

Our traveling education trailer reaches audiences of all ages, inspiring curiosity and commitment to the health of our shared environment. We especially focus on youth education, equipping the next generation with the knowledge and confidence to champion conservation and advocate for sustainable landscapes.

**It's all connected—from bluebunch wheatgrass to bighorn sheep,  
from the quiet trail to the crowded lake.  
Together, we can conserve the wild, resilient landscapes we all love.**





## Strategic Plan

Grow Wild's Strategic Plan, 2026-2030, builds on 20 years of experience and success in conserving natural resources in the Upper Gallatin Watershed. Our project area includes some of the county's most ecologically and economically vital resources. Safeguarding these natural assets from the impacts of rapid community growth - marked by a 50% population increase between 2010 and 2020 - demands a significant commitment of effort and investment.

Grow Wild addresses the critical need for conserving native species and protecting local ecosystems. We focus on educating the community about the threats posed by invasive species and the importance of responsible environmental stewardship. Through our efforts, we inspire individuals to actively engage in the conservation of land and natural resources, ensuring the health and sustainability of the environment for future generations.

Our organization serves a broad community that includes landowners, residents, workers, visitors, youth, and recreational enthusiasts in Big Sky and the surrounding areas. Since our founding, we've engaged with over 17,000 youth and 7,400 adults, hosting or presenting at 331 classes and events. Additionally, we've assisted 1,093 landowners managing over 12,900 acres.

Our outreach efforts, such as the PlayCleanGo initiative—which includes eight trailhead signs, a multimedia campaign that has reached millions, and the distribution of 642 PlayCleanGo kits to local youth—have significantly expanded our impact.

We also prioritize wildlife conservation, recognizing that protecting wildlife habitats is essential to sustaining the ecosystems we all depend on—for clean water, food, shelter, economic livelihoods, recreation, and the natural beauty that enriches our lives. Our work includes treating 315 acres of HOA open space, improving 1,541 acres in the Gallatin Canyon, and pulling over 25,554 pounds of noxious weeds with the help of 1,858 volunteers.







Our programs not only support biodiversity but they also safeguard the vital ecosystem services—clean air, water, and soil, pollination, carbon sequestration, and flood control—that sustain human well-being and a thriving local economy. Ultimately, we serve everyone who benefits from or interacts with the natural resources that define Big Sky and its surroundings.

We are dedicated to preserving the ecosystem of the Upper Gallatin Watershed through education, prevention, and active conservation efforts. Our programs focus on three key areas:

1. Conserving native species and restoring biodiversity
2. Preventing and managing invasive species
3. Serving as a community resource for land stewardship

As Grow Wild looks to the future, we face a convergence of growing threats to our landscapes—including climate change, rapid development, shifting land ownership, increasing recreational pressure, the spread of invasive species, and the continued loss, fragmentation, and degradation of wildlife habitat.

Grow Wild is addressing these challenges through the actions outlined in this Strategic Plan, aimed at enhancing ecosystem health in the Upper Gallatin Watershed. We recognize that new challenges will continue to arise, requiring ongoing adaptation and action.

**Conservation doesn't just happen; it requires a collective commitment, a long-term vision, and ongoing investment to yield impactful results.**





## Strategic Focus Area: Land Stewardship

This focus area consists of 3 programs:

1. Landowner Assistance
2. Education & Outreach
3. Clean Recreation

### Landowner Assistance

*Assisting landowners is the cornerstone of our work, as they play a crucial role in noxious weed management and are the driving force behind effective land stewardship.*

Goal: Facilitate active landowner stewardship to maintain healthy plant communities on private property and adjacent public lands.

Objective: Provide landowners with the tools, resources, and best management practices needed to control invasive species, conserve native plants and wildlife habitat, and protect the land for future generations.

1. Provide free on-site assistance, resources and education, and ongoing coaching for landowners so they can implement sustainable land management practices using integrated weed management strategies.

Strategies:

- Provide site visits to 100% of landowners that request one (based on our long-term track record, we assist an average of 25 landowners and impact an average of 200 acres every year)
- Assist 100% of all landowners, land managers, businesses, operations, organizations, or individuals that seek information about invasive species, native species, and sustainable land management
- Send annual postcard mailer to all landowners within our project area about invasive species, our free services, and resources available to them
- Produce and disseminate educational materials
  - Annually update, print, and distribute our Landowner Stewardship Guide and weed species specific rack cards
  - Secure and distribute Montana Weed Control Association's Weed ID Guide
- Ensure site visits remain free (no cost), as any cost represents a barrier to noxious weed management





## Landowner Assistance cont.

### 2. Actively contribute as one of four partners in Alpenskapes.

Alpenskapes is a collaboration among four Big Sky organizations: Gallatin River Task Force, Grow Wild, Big Sky Sustainability Network Organization, and the Big Sky Fire Department. Together, our goal is to create a centralized source of information on landscaping practices that prioritize water conservation, native species, drought resilience, and reduced wildfire risk. All four partners have a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and contribute equally to the partnership's financial needs, which are managed and implemented by Latta Consultants.

Alpenskapes is a partnership formed by four existing Big Sky organizations based on the belief that landscapes can be both beautiful and beneficial to the environment. We believe in a future where wildfire-resistant, water-wise, and wildlife-friendly landscaping is the norm.

Through strong partnerships, we can amplify our impact, share resources, and develop innovative solutions to protect and restore natural landscapes.

#### Strategies:

- Attend monthly planning meetings
- Supply text, photos, or other materials to Latta Consultants on an as needed basis
- Provide editing services for regular social media posts, 6 *Thriving Landscapes* articles in *Explore Big Sky*, and monthly e-newsletters
- Assist with planning and development of outreach materials, website, and social media
- Represent Alpenskapes at community events
- Promote Alpenskapes at Grow Wild events







## Education and Outreach

**Goal:** Empower our community to become environmental stewards by educating them about native and invasive species, conservation practices, land stewardship, wildlife habitat, and responsible ways to enjoy the outdoors.

**Objective:** Grow Wild collaborates with partners and organizations on a variety of projects, develops and shares educational materials, and provides learning opportunities for both youth and adults to advance our conservation goals.

1. Educate youth through hands-on learning (local youth events, camps, field trips, etc) to understand the evolving ecological landscape while equipping them with the knowledge and tools to become the next generation of conservation leaders.

### Strategies:

- Reach 1,750 youth annually
- Host or participate in 40 youth education events annually
- Build and maintain database of partners, identifying new partners with concerted focus on Big Sky schools and youth groups
- Build and maintain youth education toolkit with games and lessons that align with state school standards
- Implement Ophir school 2nd grade field trip and 4th grade Pull Your Share field trip
- Employ Education Trailer at every possible opportunity
- Accept invitations and collaborate with partner organizations across Southwest Montana, utilizing the Education Trailer whenever appropriate
- Track quantitative and qualitative metrics via end-of-event quizzes, teacher/leader surveys, post-event shares, requests for continued engagement, participant feedback, and anecdotal success stories





## Education and Outreach cont.

2. Educate adults and landowners, providing them with the tools and resources needed to manage invasive plants, conserve native species, and implement best management practices using adaptive strategies.

### Strategies:

- Reach 1,500 adults annually
- Host or participate in 32 adult education events annually

3. Host community events and programs to educate and inspire the public about land stewardship, fostering a deeper connection to the environment.

### Strategies:

- Lead 3 guided interpretive hikes, June-August
- Host a booth at Big Sky Farmers Market, minimum of 11 markets, connecting with at least 400+ people per season
- Host or participate in 20 community education events annually
- Collaborate with community organizations and partners, year-round

4. Produce & disseminate educational materials through our website, e-newsletters, social media posts, articles, and publications year-round.

### Strategies:

- Maintain website with regular and timely updates
- Produce monthly e-newsletters
- Utilize social media platforms to inform, educate, and inspire our community
- Write 6 *Thriving Landscapes* articles annually published by *Explore Big Sky*
- Produce, update and refresh education and promotional publications (*Landowner Stewardship Booklet, Guide to Creating Pollinator Gardens*, rack cards, species guides, etc.)
- Reach 4,500 people annually through the above platforms and publications
- Hardcopy and electronic versions of Annual Report

5. Employ our education trailer at community events at every possible opportunity.

### Strategies:

- Maintain and improve the education trailer with displays and resources that engage and inform the public
- Employ our education trailer at community events, farmers market, and partner events annually





## Clean Recreation

**Goal:** Promote clean recreation practices to foster a stewardship ethic and prevent the spread of invasive species—recognizing that prevention is the most effective, economical, and proactive approach to management.

**Objective:** Advance nationally recognized education, awareness, and prevention campaigns.

1. Promote *PlayCleanGo*, a patented education and awareness campaign owned by the North American Invasive Species Management Association (NAISMA), designed to raise awareness among outdoor enthusiasts about the importance of preventing the spread of terrestrial invasive species by cleaning equipment, vehicles, and gear before and after enjoying outdoor activities.



### Strategies:

- Partner with NAISMA to ensure campaign aligns with brand guidelines
- Maintain 8 existing trailhead signs with boot brush stations
- Install 6 new trailhead signs in partnership with Custer Gallatin National Forest
- Implement community-based social marketing to elevate awareness of *PlayCleanGo*
- Incorporate *PlayCleanGo* into all education events, utilizing education trailer when possible
- Promote *PlayCleanGo* regularly on social media accounts
- Distribute *PlayCleanGo* t-shirts and other promotional items at the annual Ophir School second grade field trip and other youth education events where possible and appropriate
- Assess the feasibility of bike wash stations and identify potential partners and locations for implementation

2. Promote *Clean.Drain.Dry.*, a nationally recognized campaign, designed to educate water recreators about the importance of and how to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species by cleaning equipment and watercraft to protect our waters.



### Strategies:

- Partner with Montana agencies and organizations (DNRC, FWP, MISC) to ensure campaign aligns with brand guidelines
- Implement community-based social marketing to elevate awareness of *Clean.Drain.Dry.*
- Incorporate *Clean.Drain.Dry.* into all education events, utilizing education trailer when possible
- Promote *Clean.Drain.Dry.* regularly on social media accounts
- Distribute *Clean.Drain.Dry.* promotional items at education and outreach events
- Partner with local businesses and organizations to increase outreach and impact



## Strategic Focus Area: Wildlife Habitat Conservation

This focus area consists of 5 programs:

1. Bighorn Sheep Habitat
2. Biodiversity Conservation
3. Conserve Our Canyon
4. HOA - Habitat Owners Association
5. Weed Pulls

### Bighorn Sheep Habitat

Goal: Improve the Spanish Peaks bighorn sheep range health, located on the northwest corner of Highway 191 and Lone Mountain Trail.

Objective: Enhance bighorn habitat by managing noxious weeds, establishing test plots, and restoring native plant populations with partners.

Strategies:

- Manage noxious weeds on 130 acres of bighorn sheep winter range annually with the help of Custer Gallatin National Forest, Montana Conservation Corps Rangeland Restoration Crew, and Gallatin County Weed District
- Implement, monitor, and assess test plots in partnership with Natural Resources Conservation Service, Montana State University, Gallatin County Weed District, etc.







## Biodiversity Conservation

**Goal:** Conserve local biodiversity and facilitate restoration of wildlife habitat by promoting the use of native plants.

**Objective:** Use native demonstration gardens to educate and inspire the community to incorporate native plants into their landscapes—helping to conserve water, improve soil health, support pollinators and other wildlife, and preserve the historic landscape.

### Strategies:

- Engage 25+ volunteers to plant, maintain, and improve Crail Garden and pollinator gardens annually
- Educate 100+ people through three open houses (June, July, and August) and guided garden tours offered by request and in coordination with partner events
- Produce and disseminate educational materials (guides, rack cards, website content, print, online, and social media) about native plants, pollinators, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable landscaping techniques
- Provide resources (pictures, video, venue, etc.) for Alpenskapes
- Add new wildflower species to gardens as they are made available by local suppliers
- Host annual native plant sale fundraiser, selling 600+ native plants
- Host Annual Wildflower Festival week in July
- Manage annual garden benefactor program to provide fiscal support for Crail Gardens





## Conserve Our Canyon

**Goal:** Conserve native plants to improve wildlife habitat at heavily used recreation sites in the Gallatin Canyon.

**Objective:** Partner with Custer Gallatin National Forest, Montana Conservation Corps (MCC), Gallatin County Weed District to manage invasive plants in high-use areas like trailheads, fishing access sites, campgrounds, roads, and river restoration sites in the Gallatin Canyon.

**Strategies:**

- Raise funds to pay for 1-2 weeks of MCC Wildland Restoration Crews annually
- Execute annual noxious weed management with partners, 4 or 8 days depending on MCC availability and funding
  - For 1 week of MCC: Treat 7 sites, cover 100 acres, treat 10 acres
  - For 2 weeks of MCC: Treat 12 sites, cover 200 acres, treat 20 acres
- Partner with Gallatin County Weed District to establish 5 monitoring stations at frequent treatment sites and monitor annually

## HOA - Habitat Owners Association

**Goal:** Provide Big Sky neighborhood associations with the knowledge and tools to sustainably manage invasive plants in shared open spaces, supporting healthier habitats for wildlife.

**Objective:** Partner with homeowner associations and County Weed Districts to improve wildlife habitat in HOA open spaces through a three-year invasive species management initiative.

**Strategies:**

- Assist 1-2 homeowner associations per year with managing invasive plants in open space for the benefit of wildlife
- Engage 5-10 landowners per homeowner associations annually







## Community Weed Pulls

**Goal:** Remove noxious weeds from public lands, parks, trailheads, and river access sites to protect ecosystem health while educating the public about their impacts.

**Objective:** Partner with public land managers to remove noxious weeds from parks, trails, and other public use sites.

### Strategies:

- Hold 2 community weed pulls annually – Gallatin River and Big Sky Community Park
- Pull 1,200 lbs of noxious weeds annually
- Engage 70 volunteers annually
- Host an annual Pull Your Share event with Ophir School 4th graders at Porcupine Trailhead
- Engage with the kids of Camp Big Sky to help “Pull for the Park” annually
- Partner with Big Sky Community Organization and Lone Mountain Land Company to “adopt a trail” weed pull – 1 annually





## Strategic Focus Area: Organization Health and Sustainability

Goal: Scale up capacity of Grow Wild to address the long-term needs of the community and landowners within the Upper Gallatin Watershed.

### Objectives:

1. Maintain an active and engaged board of directors consisting of 3 to 11 members.

### Strategies:

- Productive committee engagement and giving by all board members and executive director

2. Form an Advisory Board

### Strategies:

- Active technical advisory board providing expert advice, guidance, and ethos to our organization

3. Develop and implement annual budgets, fundraising plans, and work plans.

### Strategies:

- Board approved annual budgets, fundraising plans, and work plans
- Explore and use professional fundraising coaching or assistance
- Identify steps to implementing a capital campaign to meet staffing and project needs as described in this strategic plan

4. Plan to increase organizational capacity.

Building such capacity is essential for everyday mission-advancing work, critical to building organizational health and resiliency, and vital to strengthening Grow Wild's role as a conservation leader.

### Strategies:

- Maintain Executive Director role
- Maintain the Conservation Program Coordinator role through 2025, with plans to expand responsibilities and transition into a more advanced position in 2026 and beyond
- Assess community needs and pursue funding to establish a dedicated forestry position that expands our impact. This forester will play a key role in supporting our partners, strengthening organizational capacity, and advancing a sustainable future through thoughtful succession planning
- Purchase a truck once funds are secured to enhance staff efficiency, support project implementation, and enable towing of the education trailer





## Strategic Focus Area: Organization Health and Sustainability cont.

5. Sustain volunteer base to assist with project tasks.

Measurable Outcomes:

- Utilizing online platforms to facilitate communications and increase engagement
- Recruit and retain at least 100 volunteers annually

6. Sustain partner network and engagement to achieve project goals.

Measurable outcomes:

- Maintain a minimum of 49 partners
- Collaborate with new partners when goals align and opportunities emerge

## Staffing

Staffing needs in Full Time Equivalent

	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Executive Director	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Outreach & Communications Manager	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Forestry Specialist		1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Big Sky Watershed Corps		0.83	0.83	0.83	0.83



## Budget

Table below includes salary, benefits and taxes.

	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Executive Director	\$96,800	\$101,500	\$106,800	\$111,700	\$117,500
Outreach & Communications Manager	\$66,900	\$68,700	\$72,350	\$75,500	\$79,500
Forestry Specialist		\$80,100	\$84,350	\$88,100	\$92,700
Big Sky Watershed Corps		\$25,000	\$28,000	\$30,000	\$32,000







## Board of Directors

Cathy Gunther, Chair  
 Mike Jones, Vice-Chair  
 Ann Cook, Treasurer/Secretary  
 Don McAndrew  
 John Councilman  
 Larry Holzworth  
 Danielle Jones  
 Krisy Hammond  
 Jennie Cohen  
 Clayton Marxer



## Staff

Jennifer Mohler, Executive Director  
 Abby Butler, Conservation Program Coordinator  
 Cooper, Clean Recreation Ambassador



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