



High Trails Program History

In August 2014 Beaverhead Trails Coalition signed an agreement to begin our largest project to date, acquiring 1,104 acres in the hills just west of Dillon.

Since then, BTC worked toward this goal and creating more than 10 miles of trails for the enjoyment of the public, forever. We also installed benches, fought noxious weeds, and set aside a wildlife reserve to allow pronghorn room to roam.

Thanks to our amazing funders and supporters, we closed on the last parcel of land in September 2019.

This means that the land from the 'M' to the 'B' will be maintained for the public forever. Once we have set up a finished trail system, we will transfer land ownership to an entity committed to long-term management of the trail system, with an agreement regarding conservation, public ownership, and permanent public access.

High Trails Facts:

- 10.35 miles of trails
- A wildlife area of nearly 320 acres (nearly 1/3 of our total land) on the east side of the project, with no trails to avoid wildlife disturbance.
- A trailhead with parking lot, signs, weed brush, and a porta-potty.
- Easements through private property (trailhead/parking lot), County, and BLM
- Possible connection to BLM land north of the project.
- Project featured in local newspapers (Montana Standard – March 2018, Dillon Tribune – January 2019 and January 2020) (see below)
- Project featured in Outside Bozeman Magazine in Spring 2017 and in Backpacker Magazine in March 2018 (see below)
- Host of numerous events such as yearly Trail Running events, education field works (with UMW, BTC wildflowers walk, Range Days weed identification field...), group bonding activities.

HIGH TRAILS LAND ACQUISITION BUDGET

PHASE I – PURCHASE COMPLETED SEPTEMBER 21, 2015

475 ACRES

TOTAL PRICE \$261,502

Source of Funds:

- Tim Speyer \$161,502
- 2015 MTFWC Trust \$100,000

PHASE II – PURCHASE COMPLETED SEPTEMBER 28, 2016

306 ACRES

TOTAL PRICE \$168,784

Source of Funds:

- Tim Speyer \$90,904
- Sponsorships* \$2,880
- 2016 MTFWC Trust \$75,000

PHASE III (SECTIONS G, H, I) PURCHASE COMPLETED

OCTOBER 1/DECEMBER 28, 2018

200 ACRES

TOTAL PRICE \$110,264

Source of Funds:

- 2017 MTFWC Trust \$50,000
- 2018 MTFWC Trust \$50,000
- Tim Speyer \$4,000 (Earnest Money)
- Sponsorships* \$6,264

PHASE III (SECTION J) PURCHASED COMPLETED

SEPTEMBER 6, 2019

123 ACRES

TOTAL PRICE \$72,184

Source of Funds:

- 2019 MTFWC Trust \$20,000
- Patagonia \$10,000
- Steele-Reese Grant \$15,000
- Tim Speyer \$2,000 (Earnest Money)
- Ravens Perch (T.S.) \$7,000
- Sponsorships* \$18,184

*The Sponsor an Acre program entails a person, group of people, business, or organization sponsoring a specific acre of land. For more details on the program, visit our webpage.

Dillon High Trails System



December 2018

200 acres

\$110,264

Beaverhead Trails Coalition

September 2016

Wildlife Sanctuary
306 acres

\$168,784

Not Open

September 2019

123 acres

\$72,184

September 2015

475 acres

\$261,502

September 2015

Donated

PRIVATE LAND WITH EASEMENT
STAY ON TRAIL

1000 0 1000 2000 ft

Legend

Trail Head
Walk/Bike Ln



Trail
Alternate



Download Map



High Trails Info



BEAVERHEAD TRAILS COALITION, INC.

PO Box 586, Dillon, MT 59725
beaverheadtrails@gmail.com
www.beaverheadtrails.org



2/17/2019

btc



HIGH TRAILS IN THE NEWS

- Dillon Tribune – January 2020

Group completes trail land purchase

By Casey S. Elliott
Dillon Tribune staff

Beaverhead County outdoor enthusiasts will now have additional trails to explore.

The Beaverhead Trails Coalition completed the purchase of 1,110 acres of land to extend its High Trails system this year, according to a press release.

“Our purchase option to acquire this entire area expired this year, but thanks to grants, donations and local sponsorship, the purchase was completed on time,” coalition President Dr. Dan Downey said.

The coalition purchased three of four parcels for Phase 3 of the overall project last year, coalition President Dr. Dan Downey said. The group needed to purchase the last 127 acres by Aug. 2019, Downey told the Dillon Tribune previously.

The High Trail consists of more than 10 miles of trails, which have been used for trail-running events, educational classes and field trips, wildflower walks and, of course, hiking. Beaverhead County High School and the University of Montana Western cross country teams practice along the trails; the additions will add options for horsemen and bikers, Downey said.

Beaverhead Trails purchased 1,108 acres of land to extend the trails system for \$609,757 from Otto and Charlene Miller Dec. 26, 2018. The purchase was paid partially through private donations, and \$275,000 in grant funds from the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust, Downey said previously. The grant requires the purchased land to be held in perpetuity for public access.

The first phase of the High Trail system was purchased in 2015; the second in 2016. Some of the trails pass through Bureau of Land Management property – where the “M” is located. The access is granted through an easement with the BLM.

“We purchased the area to keep it open to public use,” said coalition Executive Director Celine Beaucamp-Stout. “However, land ownership comes with responsibility for good land management.”

The purchase included a grazing lease, and the coalition is working with the rancher to improve livestock management. Public use of the property also comes with problems. Users often forget that the area is private property needing permission for hosted events. Additional problems include failure to manage dogs and their droppings, damage to native vegetation, sign damage and vandalism to benches. The area is closed to motorized vehicles.

Once all work improving the trails is complete, they will be turned over to Beaverhead County as a permanent public park, Downey said previously.

Though the group plans to keep the entire area open to public use, they ask users help maintain the trails by pulling noxious weeds, leaving rocks in place (erosion control and archaeological value), not building random structures, and respecting use by others.

Those wanting to hold special events or help maintain the area should contact beaverheadtrails@gmail.com.

- Dillon Tribune – January 2019



Upcoming trails

An image of the west foothills of the High Trails area, with the Pioneer Mountains in the background. The Beaverhead Trails Coalition is one step closer to acquiring all the land it needs to complete the High Trails System in Beaverhead County. Courtesy photo

Beaverhead Trails inks deal for large portion of land in High Trails expansion

By Casey S. Elliott
Dillon Tribune staff

Beaverhead Trails Coalition has purchased the majority of land for development of its High Trails System, with one parcel in Phase 3 left to purchase.

The purchase, officially recorded Dec. 26, nabbed three of four parcels in Phase 3 to extend or improve existing trails, Beaverhead Trails Coalition President Dr. Dan Downey said.

The Beaverhead Trails Coalition wants to develop more trails in and around Dillon to provide more outdoor hiking and riding options around town.

"There's very little public access to hiking near Dillon. If you drive 40 minutes into the Forest Service land, there's a lot of public access. But the Dillon area is very landlocked because of private land holdings. The idea was to have a trailhead right next to town for public access," he said.

The nonprofit signed an Aug. 2014 buy/sell agreement with landowners Otto and Charlene Miller, to purchase 1,108 acres of land to extend the trails system. The total purchase price for all the land is \$609,757, Downey said, which has been paid for partially through private donations and \$275,000 in grant funds from the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust.

The first phase of 475 acres was purchased in 2015. The second phase purchased was 306 acres in 2016. This most recent purchase was for 327 acres for three of four parcels of phase 3.

There are a total of 10 miles of trails in the system with this latest purchase, he said. The High Trails system is adjacent to the existing Dillon Town Overlook Trail immediately west of town.

The trails are unpaved biking and hiking trails, but can also

be used for horseback riding, Downey said. When the land is purchased, the existing trails are assessed to determine what works needs to be done, and then are improved for public use. For the most recent purchase, there are some improvements that need to take place but not a huge amount, he said.

"The trails out there are already in decent shape," he said. "We don't anticipate building new trails on that portion at this point."

Some of the trails pass through Bureau of Land Management Land – the site of the "M" – through an easement with the BLM, Downey said.

The grant dollars require the land purchased to be held "in perpetuity" for public access, he said, so the trails will be turned over to Beaverhead County as a permanent public park when all

work is complete.

The last parcel, 127 acres total, must be purchased by August 2019.

The coalition worked with groups at the University of Montana Western, Montana Youth Challenge Academy, the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, the Forest Service and Beaverhead County High School to improve the trails.

Once the high trails system is complete, Downey said the coalition wants to seek an easement to have trails go into BLM and Forest Service Land at the northwest corner of the existing property boundary.

"Our goal has been to help improve the morale and health in the community by building trails and providing public access for trails," he said.



DR. DAN DOWNEY, PROVIDED

Horseback riders are pictured on a trail near the new land purchased Wednesday by the Beaverhead Trail Coalition to expand the network of trails in the foothills west of Dillon. A celebration begins at 3 p.m. Saturday at the Ten Mile Road trailhead and will continue at the Beaverhead Brewing with music provided.

Dillon group acquires more land for public access trails

The Beaverhead Trail Coalition acquired more than 306 acres Wednesday to enlarge the high trails network in the foothills west of Dillon.

A celebration of the purchase will begin with a trail exploration in the new acquisition area starting at 3 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 1, at the Ten Mile Road trailhead. The celebration will continue at Beaverhead Brewing, 218 S. Montana St., Dillon, at 5:30 p.m. Music will be provided by Bill Dwyer and Dave Walker.

The coalition has now acquired a total 781 acres to support public access

for hiking in hills west of Dillon. The coalition spent \$168,520 for this purchase. Of that money, \$75,000 came from public funds through the Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust. The remainder of the money came from private donations, said coalition president Dr. Dan Downey.

This transfer gives the coalition ownership to much of the land between the "M" and "B" west of town. Related land in the area is managed by the Bureau of Land Management and Beaverhead County, according to Downey.

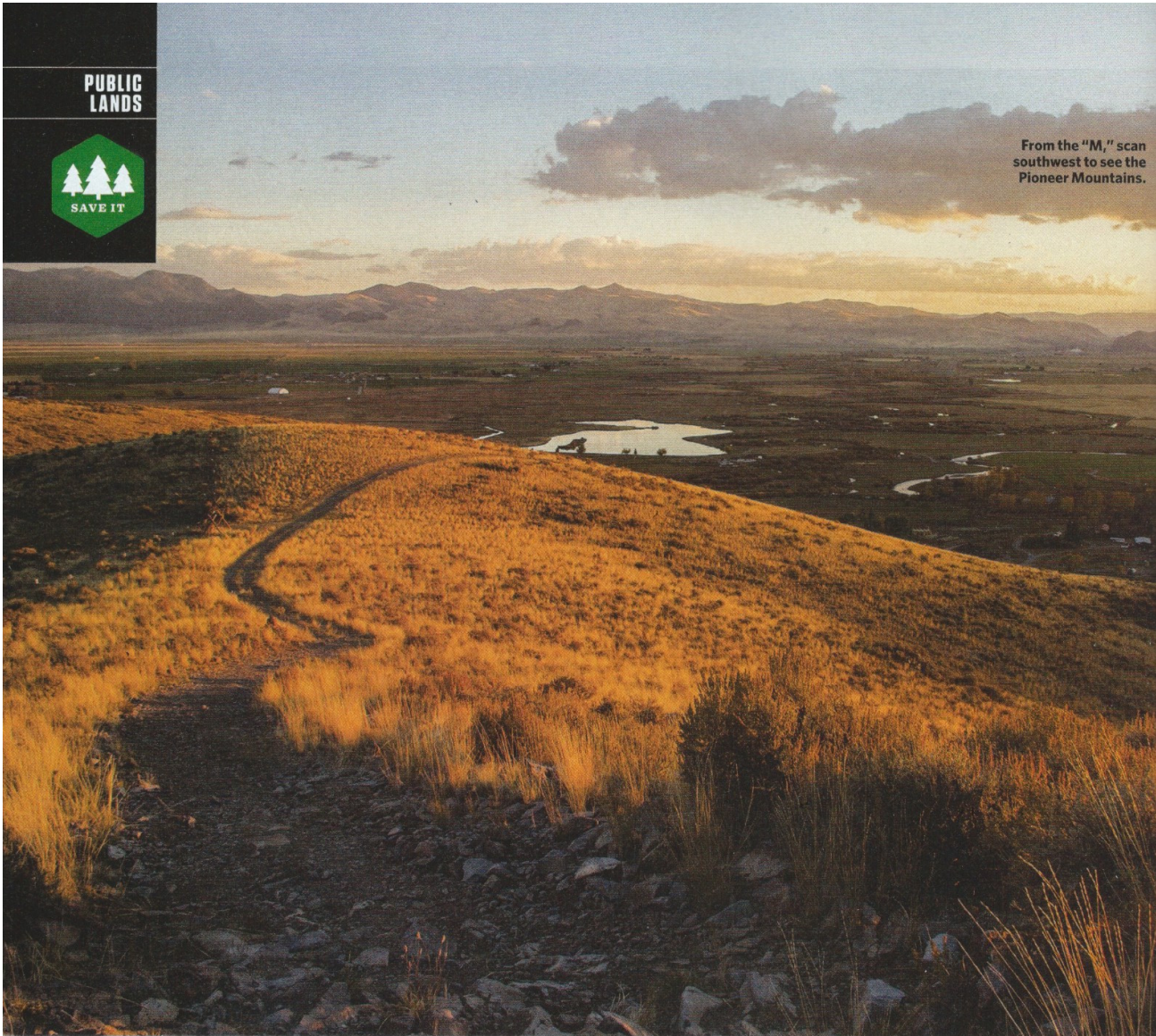
"Now we need to set our sights on acquiring another 327 acres in Phase 3 to complete our original ownership objectives for the area," adds coalition member Pete Wakeman. "Phase 3 includes an additional trailhead option that is much more suitable for horse and mountain bike access."

Money for the overall project has been provided by grants and private donations. The coalition is planning a new fundraising campaign for Phase 3. Tax-deductible donations can be made online at beaverheadtrails.org, or a contribution can be

mailed to P.O. Box 586, Dillon, Montana 59725.

Once the original acquisitions are completed, coalition members are investigating the option of obtaining additional trail easements across private land to the north to provide access to public lands that extend to the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest in the Argenta area.

"The radio tower area immediately above the 'B' remains in private ownership due to high property values," Downey said. He asked that no one trespass on that property.



PUBLIC LANDS

SAVE IT

From the "M," scan southwest to see the Pioneer Mountains.

WESTERN FRONTIER

High Trails

Dillon, Montana

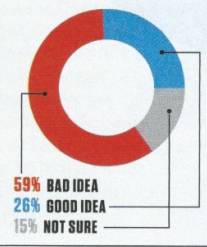
WHEN THE BLM SOLD off 1,100 acres to a private buyer in the 1980s, residents of Dillon, Montana (population 4,257), lost access to their local hiking, biking, and equestrian trails—which subsequently required a half-hour commute to reach the goods. The Beaverhead Trails Coalition negotiated with the new owner, who agreed to sell—if the BTC could come up with the money. So far, the BTC has raised more than \$430,000 in donations to purchase 781 acres, which eliminates the car time. Construction on new trails has already begun, but the group needs \$130,000 more for the final 327-acre parcel, which offers an even remoter feel along the trail system's western edge. Donate and then visit to show your support—and help remove the KEEP OUT signs still posted there.

The High Trails network currently consists of 3 total miles of hiking paths that climb the 300- and 400-foot bluffs along the broad Beaverhead River and roller coaster across treeless prairie. From the parking area on 10 Mile Road, follow the Dillon Town Overlook Trail for .8 mile, gaining 400 feet on the approach to the hillside's landmark "M," an homage to local University of Montana Western. Then continue north on marked trails nearly a mile farther, rolling across the grassy ridgeline to savor views west to the Pioneer Mountains bordering Idaho. Head south to complete the 3.5-mile loop.

TRAILHEAD Dillon Town Overlook (45.2179, -112.6751) **SEASON** Year-round **PERMIT** None **CONTACT** beaverheadtrails.org

YOUR LAND, YOUR VOICE

The National Park Service has proposed raising prime-time entrance fees at some of our most popular parks to \$70. Good idea or bad idea?

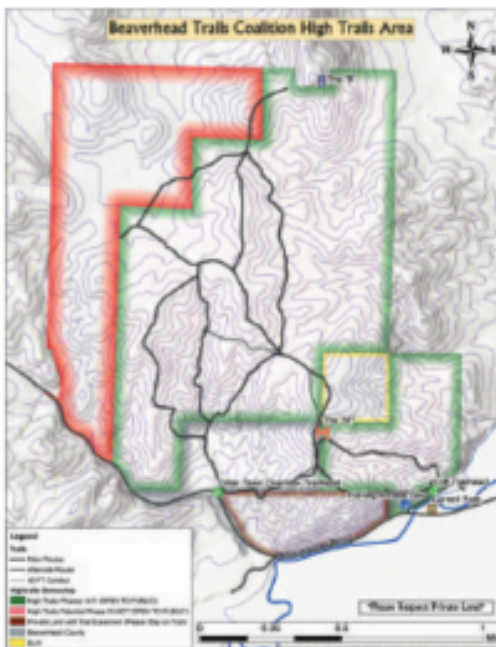


- Outside Bozeman – Spring 2017



Snowy mountain ranges frame Montana's big sky in almost every direction as you take a deep breath of crisp, sage-scented air. You shift your gaze down to the Beaverhead River, glistening as it winds through the valley far below. It's mud season, but there's almost none on Dillon's rocky High Trails, just a few old snow drifts melting away and the first wildflowers peeking out among the sage. In the stillness of these wide-open spaces, you can almost hear your heart beating from the climb to this quiet summit.

And you thought the high point of the day was going to be making impulse buys at the Patagonia Outlet! After stretching your wallet buying all that gear, you wanted to stretch your legs before the drive home—maybe you'd be able to find a pleasant stroll in a park. As you try to decide which ridge to follow or which hill to climb next, you wonder how did the High Trails happen?



Well, you can thank the **Beaverhead Trails Coalition**. This volunteer-run community group has raised over \$430,000 to purchase 781 acres directly west of town across the Beaverhead River. By August of 2019 they need to raise an additional \$180,000 to purchase another 327 acres. Along with the YMCA and other partners, they're also working on in-town trails. If that pleasant stroll is what you're looking for, head to the YMCA on Swenson Way to enjoy paved and gravel trails linking wetland areas and the Blacktail Meadows fishing access and kids' fishing pond.

PHOTO BY BEN WOOLFE, MAP COURTESY BEAVERHEAD TRAILS COALITION

dillon

To access the High Trails, park at the large trailhead on Ten Mile Rd., less than two miles from downtown. Currently, this is a great outing for hikers and trail runners. If you bring your bike, don't expect trails rivaling a Montana mountain-biking destination like Helena... at least not yet. The mix of old two-tracks and cow trails will have you pushing your bike up steep climbs, and enjoying the scenery and exploration more than the flow. Cows don't do flow. There is some good singletrack, but it tends to fade in and out, and you'll need to keep a sharp eye out for prickly pear cactus. Horses are welcome too. The High Trails are open to all non-motorized uses and the local Backcountry Horsemen's group is actively involved in the effort.

The Dillon Town Overlook trail climbs to a ridge directly above Dillon's "M" and is roughly half the distance and elevation gain of the hike to Bozeman's "M". Don't be put off by the trailhead's industrial feel. It shares a small valley with a closed landfill the city is still using to store gravel and other materials. Another marked, but less obvious, trail skirts the old landfill's west side and climbs into the heart of the hills. Maps are posted at the trailhead and on the Beaverhead Trails Coalition website (beaverheadtrails.org), but it would be hard to get lost since the hills are all open prairie where it's easy to keep your bearings. When you're done exploring, stop in for a tasty local beer at the Beaverhead Brewing Company—the venue for many trails fundraisers.

What does the future hold? Trail improvements are being planned, and if the next land purchase is successful, there will be an additional trailhead along with more trails in an area of the hills with gentler grades—which is better for bikers and families with young children. Long-term, a few more land deals and easements could link the High Trails with other public lands to create a trail all the way to the southern end of the Pioneer Mountains—approximately 14 miles away. The Beaverhead Trails Coalition is just getting started! 🌟

Notable Community Support

The Wheat Family provided an easement for a segment of the trail to pass through their land to reach the ridge.

The United Way of Beaverhead County has provided \$2,000 for the project in 2018. Some of the funds were used for the construction and installation of the trailhead sign.

Beaverhead County provided labor and materials to build the trailhead parking lot.

The Erb family donated 6 acres of riverfront property to the BTC for this project.

The Dillon BLM and the Department of Agriculture donated and installed a Noxious Weed Sign and boot brush at the trailhead.

Volunteer Work Days – The trails were largely built by volunteers and members during a multitude of work days.

For example (among others!):

- in 2014, over 30 students from the university of Montana Western, along with 10 community leaders provided 150 volunteer hours maintaining trail, re-vegetating areas with native seeds, and building fence.
- In 2018, the Beaverhead County Highschool Cross Country Team help lay the path for Tim's Ridge by installing cairns. It took them a couple of evenings!
- In the summer 2020, volunteers provided over 50 hours to re-route Cliff Trail and necessary maintenance on Grand Canyon Trail.