In our imaginations, the Northern Rockies remain wild and whole... golden rangelands sweeping up to big-shouldered mountains cloaked with snow... elk bugling in an aspen grove...a grizzly bear padding through a willow thicket...cattle grazing a mountain meadow. Where winter's powder is perfect, and summer's hiking and biking incomparable. A place where an independent spirit can live close to nature away from the stresses of urban life.

Yet, the allure of the region may signal its demise. Contrary to popular myth, the Western landscape is neither wild, nor free, nor indomitable. Much of the West is filling with rural subdivisions, highways and strip malls. The Northern Rockies are but a remnant of the Western frontier. Pressures are mounting. The way we treat these remnants will determine the landscape we enjoy as the years pass and new generations take our place.

There are ways to live in this special region that protect its integrity. The Corporation for the Northern Rockies invites you — through this publication — to learn about vacation, real estate and home-building choices that channel our affection for the land into actions that preserve the dazzling vistas, abundant wildlife and quality of life we enjoy today.

Welcome to the West!
Here’s a little-known paradox: Although the American West is made mostly of rock, it supports a greater diversity of plant and animal life than the loamy Midwest or the East. Here’s another paradox. In spite of the West’s high biological diversity, it’s extremely fragile – more fragile than any other part of the country.

Put simply, the rocky, arid West can’t sustain the level of development we’ve seen on the water-rich coasts and in the Midwest. If we want to keep the West the way we love it - wide open and wild - we’ve got to rethink rural development and show restraint in our personal choices.

Although subdivision and sprawl still prevail in the urbanizing West, new strategies are helping visitors, landowners and land buyers sustain the qualities that drew them to the region. Each has its advantages and disadvantages, but the good news is there’s a “sustainable choice” to fit most situations.

Conservation Vacationers, Buyers and Landowners Create a Sustainable Future

Abundant wildlife. Open vistas. Intact ranchlands. Vibrant communities. Healthy economies. These are the features of a sustainable Northern Rockies. Visitors and new residents help our region reach this goal by becoming “conservation” vacationers, buyers and landowners.

Conservation Vacationers choose to recreate in the region instead of buying or building a summer home that will only be used a few weeks a year. Spending time and money with experienced local guides or staying at guest ranches, vacation rentals and other lodging help fuel the region’s recreation economy, and it limits the number of new house “footprints” on the landscape. Taking a guided or guest ranch vacation is also much less expensive and problematic than buying and maintaining a recreation property, especially if it will only be used a few weeks or months a year.

When shopping for a property, Conservation Buyers blend their desire to live in the region with their stewardship ethics. They commit to ownership strategies that protect the region’s landscape and way of life by seriously considering:

- Purchasing a house in town
- Buying property that has already been developed
- Buying property adjacent to existing infrastructure such as utility corridors and roads to minimize development of wild land
- Partnering with a farmer or rancher to buy and build on a small parcel in a way that allows continuation of the agricultural operation and also minimizes ecological and aesthetic impacts (see page 5)

Once a property is purchased – be it a large ranch or a small place in town – Conservation Landowners use sustainable practices to build their homes and manage their land. These practices may include:

- Building away from wildlife habitat, migration corridors, riparian areas, flood plains and ridgetops
- Building energy-efficient houses using sustainable building designs and materials
- Landscaping with drought-tolerant native plants suited to the region
- Managing land and livestock with sustainable agricultural practices
- Joining in community efforts to restore damaged grasslands, forests and watersheds and to control weeds
- Managing livestock cooperatively with like-minded neighbors
- Donating a conservation easement as a way to preserve the land in perpetuity

SUSTAINABILITY: Living in ways that meet our present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
A Conservation Professional Can Help You Find—a Sustainable Home in Town or in the Country

A ny realtor can help you find a house or a piece of land. A small but growing group of real estate professionals (realtors, brokers, appraisers, accountants, surveyors, attorneys and habitat experts) are specializing in private land conservation. A conservation real estate advisor can help you define your conservation values as well as satisfy your land purchase desires.

The following are some guidelines to consider when you’re looking for a conservation-oriented real estate professional:

**Project Portfolio**
Professionals who specialize in conservation real estate have direct experience with conservation easement transactions and can document conservation outcomes as a result of their sales. They have established relationships with professionals who facilitate private land conservation, such as sustainable development organizations, land trusts, land management agencies, “green” developers, land use planners, architects, and habitat enhancement specialists.

Ask the professional if he or she has received training in private land conservation. Also ask what projects she or he has worked on in the last five years. If most of them have a conservation outcome, then you know that professional is specializing in conservation real estate and not merely adding the term as a gimmick to a conventional practice.

**Philosophy and Practices**
Most conservation professionals have websites that educate clients about their philosophy and practices. This is especially important for design/building firms that emphasize natural approaches and materials. Conservation professionals emphasize working with natural systems, taking an interdisciplinary approach and using natural or sustainably produced materials.

**References**
Check with past clients to compare a professional’s philosophy with actual practices. Ask for several references. Ask references for names of others who may be familiar with a professional’s work.

**Advertisements**
Be wary of real estate ads that proclaim “perfect for a conservation easement.” Some realtors tout a property’s “conservation easement potential” without first checking with a land trust or appraiser to see if the property qualifies for an easement program. Ask the realtor how they know it’s appropriate for a conservation easement. Also ask what experience they have with easement transactions.

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**Creative Ownership Strategies**

**Creative Ownership Strategies**
You may not have to own a whole ranch to enjoy protected views and private recreation. Several landowners and land buyers have worked out creative ownership strategies that give newcomers room to roam and protect the rancher's tenure on the land. Possibilities are limited only by your finances, your ability to define what you want, and the creativity of landowners and real estate brokers.

**Collaborative Management**
Another way to enjoy the romance of ranch life without doing all the work is to buy into a subdivision that is managed collaboratively. With this approach local ranchers can use pastures from the newcomers’ land in order to rest, or otherwise improve conditions on both sets of properties. In return, the newcomers get range-science expertise in managing their grazing lands and can enjoy a working partnership with their neighbors.

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To increase the proficiency of real estate professionals, the Corporation for the Northern Rockies offers accredited courses on a variety of private land conservation topics. Courses are accredited by the Board of Realty Regulation, Board of Accountancy, Board of Appraisers, the BAR Association and the Association of Surveyors.
CONSERVING THE WESTERN LANDSCAPE THROUGH SUSTAINABLE VACATION CHOICES

Confessions of a Repeat Guest Ranch Vacationer
By Nancy White

When I arrived in Montana, I was a little worried that my first guest ranch experience would seem too much like Disneyland – too artificial, too “slick.” I threw my stuff into the back of a pickup, and headed down what seemed like the longest dirt road in America. At the end of that road was the beginning of a perfect vacation – a big Sunday meal and miles of the most beautiful trails I’d ever seen.

From the first day of my stay to the last, the staff at the 63 Guest Ranch invited me to be a part of their family life. They made sure my experiences there were rich. My son caught his first western trout on a fly line because one of the guides showed him his favorite fishing hole. One cloudless summer day during a long ride, a wrangler taught my son to whistle through his fingers, a trick he has passed on to his friends at school. We rode for hours without crossing a road. There were fields and farms we crossed on horseback and AMAZING views that I could have never, ever hoped to see because the 63 Ranch’s long association with the area has afforded them access to private property ordinarily off-limits to hikers and riders.

I never worried about paying taxes, mending leaky roofs or doctoring sick barn cats. Funny thing, the staff of the 63 Ranch seemed as eager to relieve me of those responsibilities as I was to give them up. I do not take this lightly. Raised a Virginia farm girl, I know just how big a dent chores put in free time. To this day, whenever I pass an apple orchard all I can think about are pruning, picking and bush hogs. I didn’t have to go grocery shopping, do dishes or check to see if the furnace still worked. You gotta love the guest-ranching life.

Now, I anticipate building on past experience. Over the years, my friendships in Montana will deepen as my knowledge of the area increases. The 63 Ranch provides an amazing “home base” from which to enjoy the state, without having to worry about property upkeep or payments. Ultimately, I don’t feel like I’m making a compromise by not buying property. I’m being selfish about my time. Forgoing the headaches, I’m free to enjoy Montana.

A Guided or Guest Ranch Vacation: All Fun and No Hassles

What could be more fun than a summer home in the Northern Rockies? How about your own personal wilderness guide or a couple of weeks at a guest ranch? While owning a summer home may be appealing, it also comes with a price. Just like regular homes, summer places require upkeep and maintenance. Who wants to spend precious vacation time repairing leaky roofs or faulty plumbing?

Outfitters and guest ranches offer a satisfying, cost-effective alternative to maintaining a vacation home in the region, while at the same time helping guests tread lightly on the land. More outfitters are specializing in natural and social history, helping clients understand the landscape as well as enjoy it.

Many guest ranches have been around for generations, and their staff can guide you to the experiences that are likely to give you the most satisfaction. Perhaps just as importantly, these options can save you the time and expense of maintaining a summer property, freeing you to enjoy your vacation.
Conservation Buying: A Real Life Example

“I wanted to disrupt the culture and the environment as little as possible.” - Don Johnston

Don Johnston is a businessman from Nashville, Tennessee, who has fished and hunted in Montana since the early 1980s. As his fondness for the country grew, he decided to buy a second home near his two favorite rivers, the Blackfoot and the Missouri.

When bad weather interrupted a fishing trip, Don had time to look more seriously for his dream property. “Through my visits to Montana, I came to realize how special it is, not only for the physical beauty, but also for the rich heritage,” Don said. “I wanted to disrupt the culture and the environment as little as possible.”

Don and his wife Nancy were referred to Lane Coulston, a conservation broker and principal of American Conservation Real Estate (ACRE). “During our first meeting with Lane, I learned about the ‘Small Homestead, Large Landscape’ concept,” Don said. “The idea made all the sense in the world to me.”

The Small Homestead, Large Landscape© idea is simple: (1) a rancher grants a conservation easement, limiting development on the ranch to only one or several secluded homesites; (2) a conservation buyer purchases one of the reserved homesites, together with a parcel of deeded land and rights to use the entire ranch for recreation with friends and family; and (3) the rancher retains agricultural use rights to the deeded home site parcel, except for a building envelope around the buyer’s home.

Coulston, a native Montanan, developed the concept because of his desire to see ranches remain intact. ACRE works as a matchmaker of sorts, bringing together ranchers who need capital, but wish to stay in operation, with buyers who want to be part of a working ranch, but don’t want the hassles of maintaining a ranch.

Meanwhile, Zack and Patty Wirth were seeking $150,000 to finance a cattle operation on their 1,000-acre ranch north of Helena. Zack Wirth’s parents had sold the cattle herd to pay debts and provide a retirement income. Zack and Patty bought the ranch from his parents with the intention of returning to the cattle business. Upon first consideration, the only way to raise the operating capital was to conventionally subdivide a large portion of the ranch, a prospect Zack emphatically opposed.

Lane connected Don and Nancy to Zack and Patty. They hit it off and worked out an agreement. The Wirths would sell a small parcel to the Johnstons and protect the remainder of the ranch with a conservation easement. Don describes the agreement as “mutually gratifying, everyone wins!” The Wirths secured debt-free capital for their cattle operation without compromising their ranch. The Johnstons have their own homesite and recreational access to the rest of the ranch without the maintenance responsibilities. And the public benefits from the conservation easement that permanently protects the open space and wildlife habitat provided by the ranch.

Don says proudly, “It makes me feel good to think we played some small part in the preservation of this very special place.”
CONSERVING THE WESTERN LANDSCAPE
BY LIVING IN TOWN

A Home that Feels Right: One Couple’s Choice that is Helping Preserve the West

When East Coast residents Sally and Thomas King began searching for a second home out West, they thought they wanted a small log cabin on a mountain, but ended up finding something much better for them and better for the land.

Their story began seven years ago, when the Kings started spending their Christmas and Spring Break vacations out West. Despite the fact that Sally had always been drawn to big, western mountains, she didn’t learn to ski until she was thirty. Then she was hooked. Thomas learned to ski as well, and as time passed, they never missed a chance to travel west. They found themselves squeezing summer visits in, then they began adding up their expenses. With their ongoing condo and rental car fees, couldn’t they just as affordably buy a small place in the country?

The Kings envisioned a place to get away from their three pressures they felt back East. And even if they brought work with them, they could just look out their window and see incredible alpine vistas, wildlife, the peaceful existence they longed for. So they took a week off and “drove the entire state of Montana.”

They found the charm and the mountains they were looking for in Bozeman, and hired a realtor to help them find their dream place. “One day our realtor showed us a place up Bridger Canyon,” Sally recalls. “The views from the lot up the long, winding road were breathtaking, like nothing we had ever imagined. Then I started picturing my life there – a good life – but at some point I asked the realtor, ‘So, how do I get out if it snows three feet?’”

That question lead to a series of other questions that got Sally thinking about the realities of living up a remote mountain side, miles from town. She was torn, but then finally said to Thomas, “Something doesn’t feel right. This whole idea of living way out here feels like too much work.”

Sally realized that what she really wanted was to be close to skiing and hiking and all the things they loved about the area, but also to be able to walk to yoga, to get a newspaper, visit friends and neighbors. “At that point, we stopped looking at property, and started looking for a house in town. I was willing to consider anything that met my three criteria – light, a porch, and charm.”

The Kings found an old Arts and Crafts style bungalow in the heart of Bozeman.

As Sally continues her career as a food writer for publications like Organic Style magazine, she realizes the significance of their choice. “We initially made this decision for practical reasons. Now, as my knowledge about the importance of undeveloped land grows, I’m really relieved we made this decision from an ecological standpoint.”

Sally writes and savors the sweetness of the short alpine summer from her porch in town. During winter, the Kings are less than a half an hour from incredible skiing. “I love my life here,” she says, sipping a cup of coffee. “Every single day I realize we made the right decision.”

“A Home that Feels Right: One Couple’s Choice that is Helping Preserve the West

“I would suggest to people looking to move to the West to be realistic, to honestly assess the impact, both personally and financially, of living out of town. If you want to be a rancher, by all means buy a ranch, but remember, it’s hard work. If you want to enjoy the great outdoors and Montana buy a comfortable, worry-free place in town and get a good map”

Benefits of a House in Town

Brothers Michael and Steve Gewirz own and operate Potomac Investment Properties, Inc. in Washington D.C. The company’s focus is development and investment in DC proper. Their projects have ranged from converting an old boiler works into a nightclub, to developing infill town home communities to mixed-use condo projects to large office buildings. The company’s goal has always been on creating a better city that attracts people who want to live, work and play in the urban center.

Their interest in the region and Montana started at an early age from various trips they made to the American West. Both brothers are graduates of the National Outdoor Leadership School as is Steve’s wife, Katie, and all like to fish, ski, hike, etc.

Steve and Katie ended up in Livingston, Montana because Michael and his wife rented a place there for a few summers before they were married. They loved Livingston because of its relationship to the river, the surrounding mountain ranges and Yellowstone Park. It was also fairly close to skiing and a sizeable airport yet still removed with a small town feel and attitude. Since both brothers fell in love with Livingston, they decided to buy a house together and share its use. “We also found that it was a very affordable place to have a second home,” says Steve.

“We then decided to buy a place we definitely started looking for a piece of land on which to build, either in Paradise Valley or Gallatin Valley,” Steve explains. “At the end of the day we decided to buy a home in Livingston and rehab it. The decision was an easy one once we understood the realities of building out of town. For one, we could buy a house in town at less than it would cost to build a new home. And, we could begin using the place as soon as we settled, as opposed to managing a construction process from 2,000 miles away. In Livingston, sewer, water, electric, phone, and cable connections were readily available, whereas outside of town they were not.

In addition, living in town we can walk to restaurants, movies, shops and the town park. This gave us more time to do the things we were in Montana for, like fishing and hiking. Picking up a gallon of milk is a five-minute endeavor, not 45 minutes. The in-town home is a lot smaller task to care for. We have neighbors and friends who look after the place when we are not around and our kids have friends to play with. I think that one of the best parts about being in town is that we have met people and have friends. We are part of a community. As a seasonal resident I have gotten more good information about places to go, hikes to take and places to fish from my neighbors in Livingston than from any other source.”

“I would suggest to people looking to move to the area to be realistic, to honestly assess the impact, both personally and financially, of living out of town. If you want to be a rancher, by all means buy a ranch, but remember it’s hard work. If you want to enjoy the great outdoors and Montana, buy a comfortable, worry-free place in town and get a good map.”
Over a dozen years ago, Manda Heron stayed at one of the oldest guest ranches in Montana. She fell in love with the country, the life and the beauty. She and her husband bought a home on fifteen acres in the forested foothills of Montana’s Absaroka Mountains. They didn’t last the winter. Deep snow drifts, muddy roads, difficult neighbors, the hassles of getting her son to and from school, coupled with the isolation, drove them to town where the living was easier. Manda’s story isn’t unusual. For lots of people, the romance of “country life” wears off when winter comes or they discover that their county can’t maintain their road, haul off their trash, provide emergency fire or paramedic response or even supply reliable water. A demographic study by Montana State University found that many new residents moved into town or entirely out of the state after less than five years of rural living.

**Things to Consider Before Buying Rural Property:**

- Severe weather can close roads, stranding residents without services or a means of escape, especially roads to ridgeline homesites.
- Counties will repair and maintain county-owned roads used by school buses but many lower priority roads are not maintained (meaning no grading or snow removal). Check with your county’s Road and Bridge Office to determine availability of services.
- Landowners are responsible for maintaining subdivision and private roads.
- Emergency services can’t always reach you in time, especially if the weather is bad or your address is unposted.
- Utility services (water, sewer, electric, telephone, and television) can be unreliable or nonexistent.
- School bus service may not exist. Children may need to be driven to school or bus pick-up locations.
- Most counties don’t have trash pickup. Garbage must be hauled to a disposal site or landfill, which is only open a limited time each week.
- Mail, newspaper and other delivery services may be slow.
- Clarifying property lines can be a challenge. Do not assume your property plat is accurate unless the land has been surveyed and pins placed by a licensed surveyor.
- Legal access can be uncertain, especially if your “access” crosses county or private property. It’s wise to obtain legal advice and understand that it may be necessary to purchase a road easement to ensure access.
- It is very important to know who owns the minerals under your land. Mineral rights may have been severed from the surface rights and sold to a different owner. Mineral right owners can and often do exercise their rights to the minerals. That means mining could occur on your land, without your permission.
- You may not own rights to the water flowing on your property. If there is an irrigation ditch on your property, the ditch owners have the right to access your property to obtain water and maintain the waterway. Check to see who owns the water rights.
- Irrigation ditches can raise ground water levels that may affect your basement or well.
- Natural streams and lakes are publicly owned in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. That means the public has a right to boat and fish past your property and to portage crafts around barriers.
- Many subdivisions and planned unit developments have covenants or deed restrictions that limit property use.
- Property owner associations are required to take care of common necessities such as road maintenance, snow removal, and weed management.
- Landowners are responsible for controlling noxious weeds on their property and can be held legally accountable if they fail to do so.
- Farmers often work around the clock, especially during planting and harvest time. This may disrupt your peace and quiet.
- Farming can cause dust, especially during dry, windy weather.
- Farmers and ranchers occasionally burn their ditches and fields to clear debris, weeds, and other obstructions. This burning creates smoke that you may find objectionable.
- Chemicals (mainly fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides) are often used in growing crops. Many people are severely allergic to these substances. Chemicals often are applied by crop dusters (airplanes) early in the morning. Spray can drift onto your property.
- Animal manure from neighboring farms and ranches can, and often does, cause objectionable odors.
- Montana still has open range laws. This means it is your legal responsibility to fence out cattle and sheep. It is not the rancher’s responsibility to keep his or her livestock off your property.

To avoid these surprises, visit your county’s planning office. They have information about which services are and aren’t available to your prospective residence.
Conservation Landowners Practice Sustainable Ranch Stewardship

Once conservation buyers make their choices, they begin the process of managing their land sustainably. Sustainable stewardship embodies agricultural practices that accomplish three goals: environmental protection, profitable operations, and high quality of life. Sustainable practices work with nature. Landowners match production times to natural cycles and use techniques that improve the health of range resources. For example, landowners fence livestock away from critical habitat and riparian areas and use short duration or timed-grazing to prevent overgrazing. They use chemical herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers only as a last resort, rather than a first line of defense. Instead, they rely on biological controls or livestock to suppress noxious weeds and to naturally fertilize pastures, thus reducing pollution to ground and surface waters. Livestock is treated humanely using low stress animal handling techniques. Many landowners also learn about—and monitor the health of—the four indicators of ecosystem integrity: the water, mineral and energy cycles and biodiversity.

These practices can significantly increase ranch profitability by reducing costs and increasing production. Healthy rangelands increase the quality and weight of livestock resulting in a higher price at the sale barn. Reduced expenditures for machinery and expensive agricultural chemicals bolster profitability even further. Significant savings come from aligning calving times to nature’s birthing cycles, which reduce supplemental feeding, veterinary bills and the cost of hired labor. Sustainably produced beef, lamb and wool also earn small premiums through niche markets. All told, there are compelling financial reasons for landowners to choose sustainable stewardship.

Conservation Absentee Landowners Hire Managers Trained in Sustainable Ranching

For some owners, it isn’t always possible to manage their property themselves. To ensure that their intentions to protect the land are carried out over time, it is a good idea for them to hire a manager trained in sustainable ranching practices.

Finding a ranch manager who understands and can help a new landowner achieve his or her conservation goals isn’t always easy. New owners often hire the rancher who previously owned the land or a ranch manager from the area. Problems can result if the manager does not share the landowner’s commitment to sustainable stewardship.

Stewardship professionals manage the landscape for ecosystem health as well as economic productivity and financial accountability. A professional who is skilled in sustainable management should have experience with:

- Implementing short duration or timed-grazing systems
- Developing and implementing drought management plans
- Using a variety of appropriate strategies to control weed infestations
- Monitoring rangeland resources and using monitoring data to adjust management plans
- Matching calving times to natural cycles
- Using low stress animal handling techniques
- Understanding costs of production for each enterprise area

To increase knowledge and proficiency in sustainable stewardship, the Corporation for the Northern Rockies works with the West’s top trainers to offer education courses on a variety of management practices.

To learn more about sustainable stewardship visit CNR’s website at www.northrock.org
Imagine a program that may provide tax benefits for protecting your land, its water, wildlife and open space – forever. That’s what a conservation easement does. Here’s how it works:

You find a nonprofit “easement holder,” such as a land trust or a wildlife agency, and agree to permanently transfer your development rights to them. Land trusts are non-profit organizations chartered to work with local landowners and residents to protect land and historic features from development or destruction. A conservation easement is usually at the center of the relationship between a land trust and a landowner, and it is a long-term protection strategy. Once the landowner has transferred development rights to the land trust, it’s the trust’s role to uphold the easement’s terms, owner after owner and generation after generation.

Easements are flexible, voluntary legal contracts that are attached to the deed and apply to all subsequent landowners. Since they are flexible, you may be able to retain the right to develop a few parcels of land. However, the easement holder may ask you to agree to certain management practices to protect the resources. The appraised value of the property is typically lowered because of the gifted development rights and the loss in value becomes a charitable contribution under federal tax law. The easement holder may also give you a cash payment, if it has a “purchase of development rights” program. In this case, since there is no charitable contribution, there is also no tax credit.

A conservation easement is not appropriate for all situations, but both a landowner or a land buyer can use this private land conservation tool to protect the land, relieve estate tax burden and shelter capital gains. However, for you to financially benefit from this program, you have to be in a certain income bracket. Check with land trusts or conservation real estate professionals for more information. And, consult your financial and legal advisors before entering into a conservation easement contract.

**Conservation Easements Yield Tax Rewards for Permanent Land Protection**

A conservation easement may generate a sizable tax credit for protecting your land forever, which is the goal of an easement. A conservation easement provides significant tax incentives to landowners who donate development rights to approved recipients, usually land trusts or natural resource management agencies. Voluntary and flexible, a conservation easement can be a powerful tool for protecting land from development and for reaching financial and estate planning goals.

For more information, see the Corporation for the Northern Rockies website.

[www.northrock.org](http://www.northrock.org)
When most people think of sheep, they envision lamb chops and wool sweaters. When Riley Wilson and Ted Williams think of sheep, they see weeds and dollars.

Riley and Ted are in the weed control business. Their sheep, The Woolly Weed Eaters, have been controlling Spotted Knapweed and Leafy Spurge since 1986. When Wilson helps a landowner with a weed problem, he generally fences off two acres of the infested area with a 5,000-volt electric webbing fence and brings in 30 sheep. Three days later he fences another two-acre plot and moves the sheep there, repeating this strategy until the area is completely grazed.

“The grazing keeps the weeds from going to seed and stresses the plant, giving grass a chance to come in," says Riley. “In areas where it has been used, grazing has increased the grasses by 75%.”

The Woolly Weed Eaters are a busy bunch nibbling weeds on private Montana ranches from Three Forks to Quake Lake to the Crazy Mountains. This works well for both the landowners and Riley. “Spurge is excellent sheep feed,” according to Riley, “and they like to eat it.”

“I got into the business when I was looking for some place to summer my sheep,” says Riley, a lifelong sheep rancher. “It took hold from there and has kept growing. Since weeds seem impossible to eliminate, I see it as job security.”
It's hard to imagine the West without horses. Even those who don't relish riding still love the sight of horses running through tawny grass. Many of us cherish a black and white photo of our five-year-old self, sitting atop a pony with a tin six-shooter strapped to our thigh. Horses are the constant companions of our cowboy dreams.

Unfortunately, the more people act out this dream in small subdivisions, the worse it is for the land and for the horses. Horses can be hard on land, and overgrazed rangeland is weed-infested rangeland. What many people don't realize is that horses on overgrazed pasture are more prone to health and behavioral issues. Horses evolved to graze as much as 16 hours per day. These long hours of grazing and moving contribute to the physical, as well as mental and emotional health of horses. Horses kept on small pastures tend to have more lameness than horses living in bigger areas.

If you're planning to keep horses on your 10-20 acre tract, knowing a few facts about grass and horses will help you maintain healthier land and animals.

### Grass Facts

- Overgrazing depletes the vigor and reproductive capacity of grass, eventually killing the plant.
- When grass dies, soil is unprotected against wind and water erosion and weeds take hold. Weeds overwhelm native plants and deprive wild animals of their main food sources.
- Grazing during the same time of the growing season each year kills most plants.
- Different grasses are more palatable and nutritious at different times of the year.
- “Take half and leave half.” In order to maintain forage vigor and vitality, use only half of the current year’s growth each year during normal precipitation years. During drought grazing may need to be curtailed to a far greater degree.

### Horse Sense

- One horse needs about 825 air-dried pounds of forage per month or about 5 tons of high-quality “horse hay” per year. “Horse hay” is primarily grass with less than 30% alfalfa. It must be clean and completely free of mold. Hay for horses must be stored in a dry location and off the ground.
- Native forage in and of itself is usually ideally balanced for horses. It’s when we create small, monoculture pastures or feed monoculture hay that nutritional imbalances occur. It is important to test forage and hay and work with a vet experienced in nutrition to effectively balance a horse’s protein, vitamins and minerals.
- In small pastures, horses are more likely to graze plants completely to the ground, leaving little opportunity for regrowth. Provide as large a pasture as possible.
- Horses are very mobile. Consequently, in moving about, they usually “tramp out” as much or more forage than they eat, particularly when confined in a small enclosure.
- The smaller the acreage, the greater the destruction of vegetation if horses are allowed to continually graze, even when ample hay is supplied.
- Horses confined to small acreage are more susceptible to parasites, diseases and boredom. A veterinarian should examine them at least once a year.
- Horses are herd animals. They need other horses to feel secure.

For more information, contact a horse pasture management specialist, local large animal vet, county extension office or Natural Resource Conservation Service. Good information sources for the small acreage owner are *Horsekeeping on a Small Acreage* by Cherry Hill and [www.safergrass.org](http://www.safergrass.org), a website containing practical advice about nutrition, grasses appropriate to horses, mineral balancing and more.

### Collaborate With Neighbors to Control Noxious Weeds

When Roger Lang bought a large ranch in southwestern Montana’s Madison Valley, he quickly took an interest in weeds. “Because of the prevailing winds, my place had a reputation for being a weed seed bank,” says Lang. He held an openhouse fundraiser for combating weeds. Lang’s eagerness to solve his weed problem showed concern for his neighbors’ welfare and increased everyone’s ability to protect their land.
The largest, healthiest, wealthiest & most mobile generation in American history is about to retire

- 100 million “Baby Boomers” will retire in the next 20 years.
- Many Boomers will bring their retirement funds to the Northern Rockies to enjoy the region's recreation and cultural activities.

Population is growing, especially in recreation and retirement areas

- Currently, more than 370,000 people live in the Greater Yellowstone portion of the region, a 61% increase over 1970.

Subdivision is on the rise

- Throughout the West, developed lands rose from almost 20 million acres in 1970 to 42 million in 2000.

Counties are struggling to pay for the costs of rural subdivision

- For every dollar of revenue raised from rural residential property taxes, many counties pay as much as 50% more than they receive in tax revenues to provide public services.
- Taxpayers bear the cost of fighting fires and floods that threaten homes built next to forests or in floodplains.

Local economies are becoming more diverse and information-based

- While ranching, farming, mining, and logging are still important to rural economies in the Northern Rockies, urban towns such as Jackson, Bozeman, and Cody are experiencing booms in the high-tech service economy.
- Total net income from farming and ranching in the Greater Yellowstone region dropped from $334 million in 1970 to $51 million in 2000.
- More people are working from home via computer modem, enabling them to live in a more rural area with a high quality of life.

Ranching is in transition

- Commodity prices for ranch and farm products often do not cover the costs of production, forcing many producers to sell all or part of their land to developers in order to make ends meet.
- Because 65 is the average age of most ranchers, The Nature Conservancy estimates that almost every major Rocky Mountain ranch between Canada and Mexico will change hands in the next ten to fifteen years.
- Many ranchers have no heirs willing to continue ranching.

Ecological Effects

- In subdivisions, songbird death rates are beginning to exceed birth rates because houses destroy habitat and draw domestic and wild predators that prey on songbirds.
- Wildlife birthing grounds and winter range are disappearing as residential dwellings spring up in these critical habitat areas.
- Wildlife movement is inhibited or blocked by subdivisions, roads, and fences preventing natural – and essential – migration.
- Traffic, noise, and roaming pets displace or harass wildlife.
- Septic systems, fuel tanks, and lawn and garden chemicals pollute streams and groundwater and harm fisheries.
- A proliferation of wells used as a source of water for household and lawn use deplete aquifers faster than they can be naturally recharged.

It’s a tragic irony that one of the most loved qualities of the West—windswept ranch lands—is the first thing to disappear during boom times. According to American Farmland Trust, the Rocky Mountain states lost 193,000 acres of prime farmland between 1982 and 1992 to rural development.

As more people pursue dreams of owning a home in the West, more Northern Rockies farms and ranches succumb to development. What do we lose when we lose traditional ag lands? More than just a few acres of wheat or hay.

First, we lose the open space that is the hallmark of the region. When development consumes traditional ag lands, we also lose rural heritage. Families and communities that have occupied and even defined a place for generations disappear, taking their local wisdom and customs with them. Who else knows exactly where the bitterroot blooms? Who else remembers the time when every ranch family in the neighborhood turned out one spring to build a neighbor’s barn?

Squeezed between rising real estate prices, plummeting commodity markets and changing values, farmers and ranchers sell out. Another chunk of open space and wildlife habitat is lost as housing developments and strip malls replace orchards, barns, horses, and neighborhood rituals.

At a time when our grocery stores are full of products from Asia, Mexico, South America, Canada and Europe, we can hardly imagine losing the abundance and variety of foods we’ve come to take for granted. But American Farmland Trust reminds us that 75% of our fruits and vegetables come from vanishing urban edge farms. The continued loss of farmlands combined with the events of September 11, 2001, prove that food security can equal national security.

How can anyone move to the region without accelerating the loss of precious ag lands or harming nature?

The Corporation for the Northern Rockies created this Welcome to the West Guide to offer suggestions that will help you both achieve your dream of owning a home in the West and protect the region’s special qualities.
Environmental Challenges

The love of wildlife and nature draws many people to the Northern Rockies. Unfortunately, rural development threatens fish and wildlife habitat. The scenic places we favor for our residences — lush riparian zones next to rivers and sloping foothills below mountain peaks — are some of the most important habitat for wildlife. The elk, deer, and bighorn sheep we see in the high country during the summer depend on forage found on the lower, privately owned bottomlands during the winter. Wildlife depend on undeveloped corridors that permit them to move from summer to winter range. These migration corridors also permit mixing of gene pools that keep wildlife populations genetically diverse and robust.

Houses and fences often block migration corridors. Activity around homes, harassment by pets, and use of off-road vehicles can stress animals, rendering them vulnerable to starvation and disease.

Large predators follow big game to their winter ranges. These predators commonly run into conflict when they reach human settlements. Bears, wolves, coyotes, and cougars can become “problem animals” when housing developments encroach on their habitat, and they begin preying on family pets.

Coulees, brushy creeks, cottonwood bottoms, and other riparian areas provide habitat for bald eagles, trumpeter swans, pelicans, and migratory songbirds. With rural subdivisions come house cats, which can prey on songbirds, reducing their populations.

Wildlife is not the only victim of rural development. Aquifers, river systems and the fisheries they support also can be harmed. Poorly designed septic systems pollute surface and ground water. The influx of nitrates from lawn and garden chemicals lowers levels of dissolved oxygen, causing the decline of aquatic organisms upon which trout depend. Dirt and gravel roads erode and carry sediment to streams, degrading water quality. Roads also act as corridors for the spread of noxious weeds that choke out native vegetation and the wildlife that depend upon it.

Less obvious than direct impacts on particular species are the long-term impacts of development on the natural processes that sustain ecological systems. In the West, periodic fires and floods are especially important for maintaining the structure and function of our ecosystems. Without fire, conifers reach maturity and become diseased. Open forests give way to dense stands of spindly trees. Fire also maintains a diverse and shifting mosaic of shrubs, forbs, and grasses across our rangelands.

Floods are necessary for cottonwood reproduction, replenishment of aquifers and wetlands, and the reproduction of several species of fish. Floods also deposit rich alluvial soil, which is important to agriculture.
Agricultural Challenges

Ranches comprise the majority of private land in the West. Agricultural producers provide habitat for 60 to 75% of America’s wildlife during some part of their life cycle and keep undeveloped much of the open space for which the region is famous.

Most rural, new home building is occurring on what was once ranch land. During the past ten years alone, popular destinations such as Park County, Wyoming, (the Cody area) and Gallatin County, Montana, (the Bozeman area) lost over 20% of their agricultural lands to subdivision.

As rural populations grow, the agricultural community finds it ever more difficult to remain in production. New landowners often complain about the noise, dust, and smells associated with a ranch operation. Pet dogs may attack livestock and end up shot by a rancher. New residents may draw water from creeks and irrigation ditches without understanding the water rights held by downstream landowners. Quiet gravel roads are converted to high-speed thoroughfares, making it difficult and dangerous to move livestock or farming equipment from field to field. Increased road traffic makes noxious weed control a never-ending and expensive battle for ranchers, who must control weeds to maintain the productivity of their land. Long-time landowners may also be forced to re-drill their wells as new home wells deplete the aquifer.

Low commodity prices and rising operating costs for feed and equipment create serious financial problems. Often this is more pressure than farmers and ranchers can take. Another “For Sale” sign appears on the landscape.

Community Challenges

Many rural subdivision costs are borne by the community. Fire control is one example. Recreational lots near the National Forests are in especially high demand. When the forest burns, government coffers are drained to finance heroic efforts to keep the flames from consuming homes and cabins. The taxpayer picks up the tab.

Rural development increases the demand for public services such as road maintenance, police protection, emergency medical services, and schools. Through increased taxes, long-time residents often shoulder these costs. A study of Gallatin County, Montana, found that for every dollar of revenue raised from rural property taxes, the county government spent $1.45 to provide public services.

In contrast, taxes generated from agricultural land provide a surplus of revenue to county budgets. In the Gallatin County study only 25 cents of each tax dollar was spent providing public services to farms and ranches.

Challenging Times Require New Ideas and New Responses

Challenges need not discourage our dreams or paralyze our plans. On the contrary, it can inspire us to find better, more creative ways of responding to the landscape and each other.

Throughout the Welcome to the West Guide, the Corporation for the Northern Rockies suggests sustainable ways to respond to these challenges.
Being close to Nature is the desire that attracts many people to the Northern Rockies. Learning to live with Nature begins by understanding what Nature needs to be healthy. It is tempting to think of nature as a mythic western character – larger than life, independent, space loving, unpredictable. However you think of nature, ecosystem integrity is what makes the Northern Rockies one of the most rare and beautiful places on Earth. Without it, the Northern Rockies would be just another mountainous region.

Home of the largest intact ecosystem remaining in the temperate zones of the earth, the Northern Rockies is a complex system of processes that include fire, flood, and drought. These powerful forces create an impressive diversity of plant and animal species. For all its power, the Northern Rockies is a fragile place. Home building strategies that work in other areas often come to grief here for both land and landowner. Understanding Nature’s ways before buying or building your home is a good way to protect Nature – and your investment.

Nature Needs Big Habitat Areas Connected by Migration Corridors to Support Wildlife

A big part of what draws people to the Northern Rockies is the chance to see and live close to wildlife, especially big game. Unfortunately, new landowners often find themselves in conflict with the very animals they came to enjoy. This is because new homes are commonly built in historic winter range, calving grounds or migration corridors.

We also love to build next to a river, stream or lake in what is called the “riparian zone.” Riparian zones are the lush areas edging waterways. They are essential for wildlife. Over 80% of all wildlife species use these areas during some part of their life cycle or as a safe migration corridor.

A corridor is a connecting strip of land that allows wildlife to travel safely from one large wild area to another. In this day and age of increasing human population and development, corridors are critical for the long-term survival of many wildlife species. As new roads and developments continue to sever critical corridors, wildlife becomes trapped, and healthy, genetically diverse populations weaken and disappear.

Wildlife Need Places to Breed, Raise Young, and Migrate Without Threat

For many, the dream of owning a home in the rural West includes a vision of roaming the ranch with a trusty dog. Dogs may be our best friends, but breeding wildlife regard them as threats. The same goes for cats when birds are nesting in the spring.

When the snow melts and the days grow longer, wildlife gives birth and rears its young. It’s a good time to keep Fido on a leash or put a bell on Tabby’s collar. In the fall, the rut begins, and then it’s time for everybody to watch out! Bull elk have been known to bash cars and trample humans in their frenzy to defeat rivals and win mates.
Nature Needs Undisturbed Soil and Native Plants to Resist Weeds and Provide Wildlife Habitat

Locals act like they're a threat to homeland security – and, in a way, they are. Weeds are invasive species, organisms out of place. They arrive on imported goods and on the clothes, shoes, and tires of human visitors. They travel in the fur and feces of transient animals. Weeds displace native plants and cheat wildlife of their customary food sources.

Nature’s best defense against weeds is soil that’s well covered by native and desirable plants. If a weed seed can’t take root, it can’t grow. Disturbing soil through building (houses, barns or roads), landscaping or overgrazing gives weeds a chance to out-compete native species.

Nature Needs Periodic Fire For Renewal

As much as we love him, Smokey the Bear had it wrong. We really can’t prevent all forest fires. Why?

Because in the West, the question isn’t if a forest will burn, it’s when. Northern Rockies forests and grasslands evolved with fire, and they depend on periodic burning for renewal.

An example of the region’s dependency on fire is the Lodgepole Pine, the dominant tree in the region. The Lodgepole Pine has cerateneous cones that need “roasting” to open and release their seeds into a bed of ash, the perfect growing medium for a Lodgepole sapling.

Suppressing natural fire only delays and intensifies the inevitable, creating “catastrophic” fires that burn too hot, destroy thousands of acres and often take human life and property. Although no one should play with fire, respecting nature’s need for fire and staying out of its way can save money and heartache.

Our region learned its first big lesson in fire ecology the summer of 1988. That was the season of fire in Yellowstone National Park. Roughly a million acres of forest burned. Headlines suggested Yellowstone had been reduced to ashes. Today Yellowstone forests are healthy, green, and growing. Young trees are replacing the mature forests charred in ’88. The fires returned nutrients to the soil, giving rise to lush grasses and forbs that benefit wildlife. New aspen groves support diversity, while burned snags provide new nesting habitat for woodpeckers and bluebirds. Wildflowers are profuse, and conifer regeneration prolific.

Yellowstone reminds us that fires are an integral component of the ecology of Rocky Mountain forests. They have occurred before and they will occur again. It’s the nature of things in the Northern Rockies.

Nature Needs Room to Flood

Historically, Westerners have spent nearly as much time fighting flood as we have fire and drought. But flooding is nature’s way of channeling excessive moisture into aquifers and rejuvenating riparian areas. Nature has some built-in structures to do the job effectively and efficiently: stream meanders and floodplains.

Unfortunately, some western landowners and communities have straightened their streams and built in the “reclaimed” floodplains. This generally spells disaster for wildlife and for people living downstream; fish and wildlife lose habitat and residents lose homes during major floods.

Nature Needs Stable Soil and Unaltered Streams to Withstand Drought and Protect Fisheries

In the West, drought isn’t the exception. It’s the rule. The land needs stable, well-covered soil and unaltered streams to cope with it. Without stable soil, stunted growth occurs and valuable trees, the few inches of annual rain and snowfall we do get, wash away, taking wildlife habitat, livestock forage and excellent fly fishing with it.

Streams with deeply curved meanders and stable banks cooperate with well-covered soil to conserve available moisture. Wide, meandering slow water down, causing it to deposit sediment and prevent the scouring and cutting that can carve deep ravines into the landscape and eat away pastureland. Meanders also create prime habitat, giving fish a variety of deep and shallow places to hide, breed and feed. A well-vegetated riparian area shades the water and keeps it cool and oxygenated, important features in exceptionally hot, dry years.

P. HERNE
Avoid Inviting Wildlife to Dinner

Second to building in historic habitat areas, leaving food and pets where wildlife can eat them is the leading source of human/wildlife conflicts. So, too, is landscaping with tasty plants.

Deer love fresh fruits and vegetables, tender grass, and tasty new shoots that they find in rural yards and gardens. The easiest way to avoid conflicts with deer is to plant things they don't like. In landscape designs, stay clear of willow and aspen. Deer are particularly fond of these species. If you want to have a garden in deer country, you'll probably have to fence it at least eight feet high. If you grow fruit trees, harvest ripe fruit as quickly as possible or you might attract a bear.

Place bird feeders high in trees, and avoid salt to de-ice walks and driveways. Salt is a sure attractant. Be careful not to leave hay, grain or other supplemental feed where wildlife can reach it. Regular access to such food sources reinforces human dependency and may increase their presence in your yard and garden.

If wildlife becomes a problem, it can be discouraged with a number of repellents and mechanical deterrents. Commercial repellents are often very effective. Or try tying bars of Ivory Soap from tree limbs within a one-yard radius of the area you wish to protect. Metal flashing wrapped around trunks to a height of four or five feet can protect trees from most wildlife damage. If all else fails, fencing eight feet high is the most effective protection from big game.

If recycling pop cans, do not leave your storage container outside. The sweet smell attracts bears. When living in wildlife country, especially with wildlife that may cause damage to property or people, make sure your garage door is closed at night.

Avoid Building in Wildlife Winter Range

Does the property you're planning to buy have sunny, southwest-facing slopes with nice views of the valley below? Golden grass sweeping up to conifers? Good access to water? It's probably prime elk winter range, and depending on where you build, you could displace an elk herd.

"Viewsheds—that is valleys and hillsides—typically serve as winter range for elk," says Dave Torrell, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's Regional Vice President. And viewsheds, of course, are where people most like to build. The beautiful Paradise, Gallatin and Madison Valleys in Montana are compelling examples of how desirable viewsheds are filling up with subdivisions and displacing local elk herds. These valleys provide wintering grounds for four to five thousand elk, but development is forcing them into conflicts with humans and threatening herd survival.

"Building in winter range impair elk's ability to travel in search of food," says Torrell. This can spell disaster for elk, who need to eat large volumes of dried forage to survive winter's killing cold. "Winter puts elk in a nutritional deficit," says Torrell, "and the additional stress of coping with fences, traffic, domestic dogs and even snowmobiles depletes their reserves. It's like running a marathon when they're exhausted and hungry. They don't die immediately, but starved individuals go off by themselves to die."

At first glance, it may seem easy to compensate by simply feeding elk through the winter. This presents its own problems. In the winter, the microflora in an elk's rumen (gut) is accustomed to the rough, dry grass that nature has provided for millennia. Human-supplied feeds, such as hay and grain are too rich, and they give elk diarrhea, which further compromises their survival.

Kurt Alt, Wildlife Biologist with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, urges people to make a place for wildlife in their home building plans. "If you're going to buy in wildlife-rich rural areas, the first and best thing to do is learn whether elk frequent your place—and what paths they travel if they do.

Before Building, Learn Wildlife Habitat Requirements

According to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks biologists, many human/wildlife conflicts occur because new landowners build houses and barns in the middle of historic winter range, wildlife corridors, or riparian areas. Consulting with local wildlife agencies and conservation groups can help you learn which wildlife has historically used your land, where and when. If you build your new home away from their old homes, you'll more likely enjoy their presence and they yours.

The key to peacefully coexisting with wildlife is by learning proper identification, where they live, and what they eat. Empowered with this knowledge, you can build outside their habitat and avoid luring them onto your property.
**Living with Black Bears**

Bears, like us, are omnivores, which means they eat meat as well as vegetables. No wonder, then, that so many of the things we do in our yards are attractive to bears. Minimizing backyard attractions forces bears to do their hunting in forests and ranges, where they're safer from us, and we're safer from them.

It is best to keep garbage in a garage or out building and not leave pet food out overnight. Even bird feeders tempt bears. Hang feeders out of bears' reach or put them on top of stout metal poles. Always put your barbecue and fishing gear away after use, and make sure stock trailers are clean.

Fruit trees and vegetable gardens are especially attractive to bears. Electric fencing is the most effective deterrent and should be 3,000 volts or higher. Even compost can attract bears and should be done inside a garage or shed.

**Living with Mountain Lions**

For the most part, mountain lions are shy, elusive creatures that live in rugged, remote areas with a lot of cover. They are inseparably tied to deer and elk as prey, but will also take rabbits, beavers, grouse, rodents, even porcupines, and have been known to attack horses. As more people move into the lions' foothill, forest and canyon habitats, more conflicts occur. Fortunately, there are precautions that can minimize problems.

Mountain lions follow deer and elk. The best way to make sure that mountain lions do not frequent your property is to minimize the number of elk and deer attractants. As with bears, garbage and pet food attract mountain lions, especially during drought or fire years. They also can prey on cats and dogs. To protect your pets, bring them in at night, and never leave them confined on a chain or in a kennel without a secured top. Mountain lions rarely roam in the open. Removing thick vegetation near your house is a good way to keep mountain lions at bay.

**Living with Beaver**

When Lewis and Clark first explored the Yellowstone River Valley 200 years ago evidence of beavers and their handiwork was everywhere. As the wild country was settled, beavers were trapped nearly to extinction. Today, the beaver is making a slow, steady comeback.

According to the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA), beavers are the world's greatest builders of small, rich wetlands. Beavers constantly modify streams by building dams and impounding flows to create ponds. These wetlands create habitat for waterfowl, fish, turtles, deer, bear, and moose. Beaver dams also improve water quality by slowing waters and allowing sediments to settle out. Beavers feed on the inner bark of woody plants and prefer aspen, birch, willow, cottonwood, and poplar. This love affair with building dams and dining on riparian trees has made them “animal non grata” in the eyes of many western landowners.

Trapping – both live and lethal – is a common way to eliminate “problem” beavers; however, this strategy also eliminates the good they do. Fortunately, there are other effective measures to avoid conflicts. To prevent flooding, MSPCA recommends a series of devices (safflers, deceivers, levers) designed to control water levels without removing or destroying the beavers. They also recommend tree guards to protect vegetation, especially small or ornamental trees. Guards are three-foot high wire cages or corrugated plastic drain pipes placed around tree trunks. Since beavers aren't climbers, a three or four-foot fence can be an effective deterrent. Chemical repellents can be sprayed or painted onto trees but require reapplication every few months. Given the important ecological role beaver play, learning to live with them can be worth the effort.

**Living with Small Mammals**

Small mammals, such as marmots, raccoons, porcupines, skunks, fox, rabbits, squirrels, gophers, and mice account for the majority of conflicts between humans and wildlife. Fliers also, particularly near agricultural operations, can be extremely bothersome. Except for potential exposure to hantavirus, which needs to be taken seriously, these animals create more of a nuisance than anything. A few simple steps can prevent headaches.

Store garbage where small animals can't get it. Seal holes and cracks around your home to keep small mammals out of attics, chimneys and crawl spaces. If you do have signs of mice, make sure you contact the County Extension Agent for instructions on how to clean up after them without endangering yourself. Once again, keep pet food and compost piles inside buildings or wildlife-proof containers. Harvest ripe fruit as soon as possible and pick up all fallen fruit.

**Living with Songbirds**

The daily bird show is one of the joys of living in the country. It's thrilling to wake up to a warbler's song or to watch the antics of chickadees in your yard.

Unfortunately, rural development is hard on western songbirds because of the mortality caused by pets. To minimize your pets' impact on local birds and wildlife, keep your cats inside and your dogs fenced or leashed. If you're in the habit of walking your dog, it's good to stay on a “routine” trail or path close to areas that you and other people frequent, especially during breeding season. According to a study by Richard Knight, Colorado State University's Professor of Wildlife Conservation, you and your dog's off-trail presence won't bother “generalist” birds like robins and jays, but your springtime walks can interfere with the nesting habits of “shy” (and declining) birds such as the Townsend's Solitaire.

Keeping pets inside, belled or leashless might be hard at first, but it will make life easier for the beautiful songbirds that depend on us to make a place for them on our properties.

**Hunting & Fishing Considerations**

If you’re a hunter and want to clean your kill near home, do it over a tarp that can be thoroughly washed with soap and water. Avoid hanging your animal near your home. If you do plan to hang an animal, build a T-pole arrangement high enough that bears can't reach it by standing on their hind legs. Place the game pole far enough from your home that you don't surprise bears as you walk out your door. Your best protection is to get your game to a processor as soon as possible.

Anglers should be careful cleaning their catch close to their home. The smell can attract bears and other predators. Thoroughly wash the area with a mild detergent.
The Long Drought: Why We Call it “The Arid West”

Although headlines would have us believe that devastating drought is news, the fact is, drought occurs somewhere in the West almost every year. Once you know and accept that drought in the West is the rule and not the exception, you can make the most of every drop of rain that falls.

Monitor to Make the Most of Available Water During Drought
Rancher and ranch management specialist Charley Orchard, inventor of the Land EKG monitoring system, says, “Planning, monitoring and management can soften the blow of drought.” Orchard recommends several steps to prepare for and respond to drought. The first is to monitor rain and snowfall. The second is to manage for moisture. This means grazing to maximize plant growth and water retention by keeping grazing periods as short as possible and leaving more than half of each year's growth at the end of the season. Orchard also recommends allowing each pasture to rest for half of the growing season and to avoid grazing the same pastures at the same time each year.

The key to coping with drought is to collect and use information for objective decision-making, rather than relying on emotion, optimism or subjective observations.

Choose Natives for Lawn and Garden
Every winter the gardening catalogs arrive with luscious photos of showy annuals and exotic trees. And every summer, gardeners lose time, money, effort and water trying to keep those thirsty plants alive.

Sandi Blake, owner of Blake Nursery north of Big Timber, Montana, has a long-standing love affair with native plants, which she says are the landscaper's answer to drought. “Some of the best aspects of landscaping with natives are that they often require less water than other plants, are more adaptable to temperature variations, and are accustomed to Northern Rockies soil conditions.”

Some of the best native and drought resistant trees include Bur Oak, Patmore Green Ash, and Tatarian Maple. For shrubs, choose Globe and Siberian Peashrub Caragana, many varieties of Honeysuckle, including Emerald Mound, Miniglobe, Arnold’s Red, as well as Potentilla, Trilobed Sumac, and Silver Buffaloberry.

Considerations Before Building Near a Stream
A stream or river is constantly adjusting itself. This is nature’s balancing act between the amount of water and gradient in the channel, and the size and amount of sediment within the system. Any disturbance, either natural or human-caused, changes this balance. Activities such as building within the floodplain, constructing roads in riparian areas, or removing vegetation can limit a stream’s ability to maintain a healthy balance.

Because floodplains are dynamic systems, there are numerous issues surrounding liability, permitting, flood prevention, and ecosystem protection to contemplate when building near a natural floodplain. Mike Sprague, president of Trout Headwaters, Inc., a habitat enhancement company specializing in the creation, restoration, and enhancement of streams, lakes and ponds, urges landowners – new and old alike – to consider the following:

- Is the stream bank relatively “stable,” or are there signs of the stream channel moving?
- Is a functioning floodplain present?
- Are stream banks covered with vegetation or are they downcut with little or no vegetation? Most stream bank stabilization techniques – especially emergency measures – are expensive and invasive. It's critically important to avoid unnecessary liability when trying to stabilize eroding banks or prevent flooding. It is also important to research pertinent regulations and permits. These include county setbacks from watercourses, and regulations contained in a variety of water laws.

Maximize the Enjoyment of your Streamside Property
For maximum enjoyment and peace of mind, build away from riparian areas and take precautions to minimize riparian impacts. In the West, riparian and wetland areas are important, even though they represent a tiny fraction of the total area. With higher soil moisture, they are more productive than surrounding upland areas, add to the overall diversity of the landscape, and attract wildlife for the food, cover and water they provide. Eighty percent of western wildlife depend on riparian areas for some part of their lifecycle.

Since healthy riparian areas decrease stream bank erosion while increasing recreation opportunities, sensitive stewardship of riparian and wetland areas is “money-in-the-bank” for the landowner.
What Fish Really Want…Catch and Release on a Different Plane

By Patrick Byorth, Fisheries Biologist

An artificial division exists in the human mind, separating us from natural systems that have sustained us for eons. This illusion leads us to commit all manner of mistakes and insults to our world. Paramount among these is a belief that human intervention is necessary for the natural world to operate. In reality, nature’s symphony would resonate if humans would play in the orchestra, rather than try to conduct.

Fish management evolved from a traditional notion that stocking more fish and more kinds of fish, was the path to better fisheries. Early fish scientists perfected the art of fish culture - spawning and rearing fish in an artificial setting where all the needs of the fish were provided by dedicated fish culturists. The techniques these pioneers developed are still used for food production and sport fisheries, but the cutting edge of fish management has taken a turn toward the wild.

In southwestern Montana, rivers and streams are renowned wild trout fisheries, where fish are products of nature. In the 1970’s biologists began to recognize that stocking artificially-reared fish in healthy waters was actually harming the natural system. They discovered that the key to great fishing was to let natural forces shape fish populations. The new cutting edge of fish management focused on protecting and restoring natural aquatic systems – getting back to the basics.

Fish need water. Fish need enough water. They need water that fluctuates through a natural range of temperatures. Fish need water in streams that flood each year, carving out new banks, eroding away fine sediments, reinvigorating plants that line them. They need natural lakes that connect to healthy streams, deep enough to store oxygen for long, ice-covered winters. They need a place to spawn, clean gravel to incubate their eggs. They need backwaters and side channels, log jams and overhanging willows where young fish can feed safely and grow old. Fish need shelter, cover in the form of boulders, fallen trees, undercut and eroding banks or tumbling cascades. They need wetlands to clean and recharge groundwater that keeps streams running after snowpack has melted. Fish need riparian zones. They need the dense, diverse forest lining streams, filtering out sediment, shading the water, producing food. Fish need food. They need algae and diatoms growing on rocks, fueled by the sun. They need mayfly, caddis and stonefly larvae scraping the algae, eating fallen leaves, and hunting each other. Fish need to die. Fish must be caught and eaten by ospreys, kingfishers, minks, otters, bald eagles, bigger fish, and humans. They are shaped by harsh forces and survive because harsh forces have shaped them. Fish need nature, kept as natural as can be.

Fish don’t need riprap, or bridges, or culverts. They don’t need dams blocking their way. They don’t need artificial ponds where a natural stream could be. Fish don’t need predator control. Fish don’t need toxic groundwater, fertilizer, or pesticides. They don’t need groomed lawns lapping at the edge of the stream. They don’t even need regulations, as long as humans regulate themselves.

Fish need humans to be informed participants in natural systems. They need us to recognize when our activities affect the ecosystem and take action to minimize our impacts. Fish need humans to design bridges that pass flood flows and roads that don’t choke streams with sediment. Fish need us to set back our homes and towns from streams to give them room to move. Fish need humans to manage our wastes to keep rivers running clean. They need us to manage our thirst to keep streams running through drought. Fish need us to manage our hunger, to leave some for seed.

The state of the art in fisheries management might be the art of letting go. Call it catch-and-release on a different plane. Instead of attempting to artificially create and sustain fisheries, we’ve had to re-learn to let nature create and sustain fisheries. We’ve had to learn how to restore natural habitats. We’ve developed technology to minimize interference with natural processes when human needs collide with them. We’ve organized ourselves into agencies and communities to try and balance competing human and natural needs. We are re-learning to play a part in the orchestra, which creation conducts. When we know it by heart, what a fine symphony it will be.

Protect, Enhance and Collaborate for Great Trout Habitat

“We see so many fishermen wading the streams,” says Craig Matthews. He and his wife Jackie own Blue Ribbon Flies in West Yellowstone, MT, one of the West’s most successful fly shops. Craig and Jackie are also leaders in fish and wildlife habitat conservation and have developed tips on conserving trout habitat.

“First of all, keep wading to a minimum,” Craig says. “We encourage our clients to stay on stream banks as much as possible. This is because wading destroys nests during spawning seasons, and any other time, wading disturbs bottom-dwelling aquatic insects like caddis and stoneflies.”

Another strategy Craig recommends is a conservation easement, which permanently protects property from development or alteration. Once such a conservation “firewall” is in place, Craig recommends working with experts to implement a long-term stewardship plan. Habitat enhancement experts can assess habitat condition and develop plans to maximize its potential. “A lot of folks get a streamside property and want to clear out the trees or plant a lawn right down to the water. That’s the worst thing they can do because it destroys the cover that keeps water cold and clear and contaminates the stream with fertilizers and herbicides. It’s best to consult with a biologist before altering the ripar-

Understand Stream Health

The streams and rivers of the West are legendary. To help landowners gain a better understanding of the stream or river under their stewardship, Trout Headwaters, Inc., The River Restoration Company, based in Livingston, MT, is offering a free, stream-health evaluation toolkit especially for landowners.

The toolkit is being released in cooperation with Corporation for the Northern Rockies (CNR). The web-based toolkit includes a stream health evaluation checklist to guide users in evaluating and scoring the condition of stream channels, stream banks, floodplains, riparian vegetation, water quality, and fish and wildlife habitats. In addition, THI is providing free, professional reports detailing the economic and ecologic importance of stream health, common problems affecting stream conditions, trout and waterfowl habitat requirements, weed management for riparian areas, and more.

Visit them at www.TROUTHEADWATERS.COM
Who hasn’t fallen asleep to the whisper of wind through the trees and wished for a forest home? Unfortunately, the trees that lull us to sleep could become torches during fire season. Because fire is a natural part of the western landscape, the question isn’t whether the nearest forest will burn, it’s when.

More and more people are building in what fire ecologists call the “fire plain,” risking themselves, their property, community resources and firefighters’ lives in the process. Building in forests also compromises resource managers’ ability to either safely use prescribed burning or let natural fires burn. Firefighters’ ability to protect both homes and ecosystems will increasingly depend on how homeowners prepare their property.

In some cases a property owner’s simple maintenance and prevention measures can save homes. Some of the greatest losses during a fire occur because pine needles, dead leaves, debris and plantings around buildings brought fire to structures. The key to protecting your home against forest and grass fires is combining fire-resistant materials with “fire wise” mitigation, design and construction techniques.

Consider making these components of your home more fire resistant:

**Roofing:** Your home’s strongest line of defense is a Class A roof. Most fire resistant Class A roofs are made of aluminum, steel, concrete, clay or slate. Such a roof is especially protective in a fire that rains hot embers. Treated wood shakes look good, but provide the least protection in a raging fire that falls from above.

**Ceilings, Walls, Floors:** Building codes typically require fire-resistant gypsum wallboard in certain locations inside a home, including between the garage and the main house. Consider using it elsewhere, in walls, floors and ceilings to help create a fire barrier.

**Exteriors:** Stucco, stone, masonry and other exterior materials are better than wood at preventing fire from intruding into walls. Metal siding provides some fire protection, but if you don’t take measures to reduce the wicking effect, it can allow condensation to develop and deteriorate material behind the siding.

**Windows, Doors:** The exterior panes of some energy-efficient dual-glazed windows crack during a fire but the interior pane can hold. Like roofing materials, doors are also fire-rated. Solid wood doors are stronger than hollow ones. Metal doors are best.

**Design:** Create barriers by building decks with fire resistant materials. Install screens over attic vents, eaves and crawl spaces to ward off burning embers.

**Additional Systems:** Fire and building officials recommend installing residential sprinkler systems. Sprinklers reduce the risk of fire deaths by 75% when combined with a smoke detector.

**Mitigation:** Fire-safety law requires some homeowners to clear flammable vegetation within 30 feet of their home, both to help stop fire encroachment and to create a defensible perimeter. Irrigated, mowed turf grass is the best fire-resistant vegetation.

Whether you’re buying or building a new home in a fire-prone area, contact your local fire or state conservation department for more information. They can help you deal with natural fire by identifying building areas away from the fire plain and minimizing fire risks to existing forest homes.
A bald eagle, talons tangled in barbed wire, hanging dead. Elk, deer and even black bear, trapped – and panicked – on a highway between two fences. Sadly, these sights are becoming common as more landowners enclose their land with fences. While fences can make good neighbors, they can also seriously harm wildlife that depend on rural property for habitat.

Fortunately, rural landowners don’t have to choose between using fences and preserving wildlife. Alan Charles, Coordinator of Landowner and Sportsmen’s Relations with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, is helping landowners implement fencing techniques that manage livestock or deter trespassing while still permitting the flow of wildlife across historic feeding ranges and migration corridors.

Charles said, “I recently worked with a nonresident landowner to install a sleeve of PVC pipe.” “We threaded the top strand of barbed wire through the sleeve and tied it to the next wire to provide high-visibility. This also lowered the crossing area so it didn’t snag on the animal’s skin. I initiated this effort because I could see that the current fence was trapping calf elk on the roadway because they cannot jump very high until they’re at least six months old.”

The value of creating a wildlife-friendly crossing is that the animals get in the habit of using it and teach their young to use it, too, instead of continually testing various crossing spots. “Safe crossings” not only help wildlife escape highways and use their historic range, it also cuts down on the landowner’s cost for fence repairs.

For non-residential landowners, it’s important to enlist their manager’s support to establish safe wildlife crossings. Charles reports that in one case, a manager for an absentee owner simply dropped the top wire for a long stretch of the fence. “This is not a good idea,” Charles said, “because crossing animals commonly get their hind feet trapped in the loose wire and end up crippling themselves and often dying there, trapped in the fence.”

If landowners are considering building a new fence, it’s a good idea to consult a wildlife habitat specialist first. Habitat consultants or public wildlife management agents can help with planning from a wildlife perspective, seeing where a new fence might cross historic wintering grounds or migration corridors. In the long run, a new fence will prove more durable and successful if it doesn’t divide habitat or trap wildlife onto roadways.

For more information about laying out and building wildlife-friendly fences, contact your state’s wildlife management agency.

For more information on living with wild neighbors, contact your state’s fish and wildlife agency.

HOW TO FENCE WITHOUT CREATING A WILDLIFE HAZARD

Photos Renée Evanoff
你的梦想中的家在西部正变得触手可及。你已经买了土地，你正在选择一个住宅用地，并且你在寻找一个理想的房屋计划。建造一个新家可能是你将要承担的最昂贵的项目之一，无论你是否在西部度过一个季节或一生，你的选择将留下一个可能持续几个世纪的印记。

为了确保你为你的景观和投资做出最佳决定，仔细考虑住宅用地、建筑设计和所用材料。在项目结束时，你会为你的决定感到高兴，因为对自然有益的选择通常对你来说也是经济上可行的。

以下是一些帮助你选择“对自然友好”的住宅用地、建筑设计和材料选择的建议。

**住宅用地考虑**

**我需要一个新的住宅用地吗？**

如果住宅已经存在于财产上，它是否可以被使用、翻新或被新的住宅取代？如果一个新土地所有者将一个住宅安置在现有开发附近，他/她可以显著减少对自然环境的影响，并节省资金。野生动物习惯于人类活动，会比在未开发区域的野生动物更容易适应。开发区域已经配备了昂贵的道路、公用事业通道和服务。

**是否在县道、公用设施走廊或其他公共服务附近有一个可接受的住宅用地？**

公用事业和其它公共服务的扩展增加了你的财务负担和地方政府的支出。研究发现，每从农村住宅用地中筹集一美元的税收，地方政府就要花费$1.45来提供公共服务。此外，每次土壤被扰动，都会增加侵蚀、表面水的沉淀和有害植物入侵的可能性——所有这些都可能是昂贵的问题。通过在拥有现有服务的地方建立住宅，你可以减少新建道路和公用事业费用对你的负担和纳税人。

**我如何减少受扰动区域的大小？**

在施工前建立一个影响的边界可以显著减少受扰动的区域。土地所有者可以咨询景观建筑师来确定保留哪些植被、使用什么通道以及堆存哪些表土（一种宝贵的自然资源）。土地所有者可以与承包商讨论该区域并在合同中确保其合规性。

**我正在远离重要的野生动物栖息地吗？**

野生动物需要远离人类活动的空间来保护自己。河岸带、森林和湿地是其中最重要的。买家可能认为在看似广阔的土地上建造新住宅对野生动物影响不大。事实上，野生动物正在不断迁移到人迹罕至的地方。当新的住宅在它们的历史领地出现时，野生动物往往会成为烦恼，破坏景观和花园。食草动物如鹿和麋鹿会吸引捕食者，它们可能也会成为家庭宠物的猎物。

**我的住宅用地位置会影响视野吗？**

通常，我们建造住宅来捕捉最佳视野，但我们可能没有考虑到我们对风景的影响力。山脊线的住宅视角可能很好，但从山谷看去，山脊线的住宅可能显得不协调。由于山脊线区域偏远且干燥，那里建造的房屋往往成本更高，且在冬季很难到达。

**我在洪灾易发区吗？**

县府并不总是成功地阻止在洪水易发区进行建设。洪水会污染河流和含水层，造成水污染。洪水区人工养殖的鱼类会引入疾病和基因，影响当地的鱼类。这不仅会增加一个房主的负担，也会增加纳税人的负担。

**住宅用地的土壤适合住宅用地建设吗？**

咨询自然资源保护局来确定你的场地土壤是否适合房屋、化粪池吸收池或道路建设。现在进行土壤评估可以避免将来的大麻烦。

**我真的需要这么大的房子吗？**

三个新术语已在西部区域流行起来："Starter Castle"、“McMansion”和“Trophy Home”。它们用来描述大型、高能见度的住宅。虽然关于住宅的大小和风格的决定完全由土地所有者作出，但豪华住宅会激怒许多区域的居民。这可能会影响一名土地所有者在进入被积雪封住的道路上得到帮助的能力，或者使他们在这个社区内感到不受欢迎。这样的住宅也可能影响其出售价值，使难以出售，如果住在乡下变成了一场噩梦。

这些只是在选择一个住宅用地时需要考虑的一些问题。对邻居和野生动物的敏感，以及我们作为土地所有者可以支付的遗产，是确保留下长期遗产的重要方式。
Steve Loken, a nationally recognized innovative developer of recycled building materials, wanted to make sure that his Missoula, Montana, house was made and outfitted almost entirely of recycled materials that are beautiful, functional and extremely energy-efficient. His house also looks as traditional as an Arts and Crafts style bungalow. “I wanted to show that you could use recycled building materials without making any compromises on the type of house most Americans want,” says Loken. “This meant that the place had to look like any other house if the ideas behind it were going to catch on.”

Another thing he did to promote recycled building products was found the Center for Resourceful Building Technology in 1990. The center serves as a clearinghouse for new ideas about building materials, complete with samples of everything from “strawboard” (a plywood substitute made from straw) to a paintable, wood-like material made from soybeans. Tracy Mumma, research coordinator at the center, keeps close track of changes in the use of materials by the construction industry. “Recycled carpets are really catching on,” she says, “as are some of the lumber products made from recycled plastics.”

Loken, who is interested in cutting down on waste altogether and making more intelligent use of our resources, says that building materials made from recycled products are becoming more available and affordable all the time.

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**Considerations Before Building A Road**

Is there a potential homesite near an existing road that would eliminate the need for new road construction? If not, and road construction is necessary, consider:

- Decreasing erosion by minimizing road bank slopes and constructing proper roadside ditches.
- Designing roads for proper drainage and reclaiming disturbed areas.
- Bearing in mind that a view-shed could be affected? Consider the scenic values of the property from the perspective of your neighbors. Will the road carve an unsightly scar across a hillside?
- Asking if the project contributes to a bigger problem? Impervious surfaces such as parking areas and driveways impair the capacity of riparian areas to absorb floodwater and runoff. This increases the volume and speed of runoff, potentially increasing flooding downstream.

The effects of impervious surfaces are cumulative, and typically increase stream flows. Not only does it result in “higher highs” because storm water (with little or no opportunity to infiltrate the soil) flows directly into rivers and streams. Impervious surfaces also results in “lower lows.” During periods of low precipitation, storm water runs off instead of percolating through the soil to the groundwater. This lack of infiltration into the groundwater reduces base flow and may actually cause streams near developed areas to stagnate, putrefy and even dry up completely.

For more information about recycled and sustainable building materials see the Corporation for the Northern Rockies website www.northrock.org
Larry McEvoy, a Billings-area emergency room physician, got to know his neighbors when he bought a couple thousand acres of what he calls the “upside down country” of steppe grassland, canyons and ridges east of Billings.

“Our goal was to increase habitat and broaden biodiversity,” says McEvoy. He and his family began by talking to their neighbors, many of them old-timers. “The question I found most fruitful was ‘What do you remember?’ says McEvoy. Many of his neighbors remembered more water, higher grass, and the occasional elk wandering through. “There were no rubs or wallows, but people did remember a few transitory animals.” This, along with soil maps and other data, told the McEvoys what they might expect to see on their land, given certain management changes. Now elk have returned to the McEvoy ranch, a victory Larry shares with his neighbors.

Good Neighbors Know Their Rights Before They Buy

Planning to Close the Road to Your New Place? Talk to Neighbors & Check Records First

Some new residents decide to close their access road to public use. In some cases this is illegal, and it almost always creates hard feelings with locals who have traditionally used the road for ranching, farming or recreating. In the West, you don't have to love your neighbor, but staying on civil terms is important in case you get snowed in or break down, and your neighbor is the nearest help.

A River Runs Through It? So Will the Public

If you buy a stream-front property or if a stream runs through your land, the public has the right to wade, fish and boat all waterways between the high watermarks. If a tree falls in the stream and blocks boat passage, public boaters have the right to portage their craft around the tree, even if it means going above the high watermark onto private property.

The public is also allowed to access streams at public bridges. This means if a public road crosses a stream that borders or runs through private property, the public has a right to fish and put a boat in at that location. Landowners will be required to remove fences if they try to prevent public access to streams that cross their property.

Who Owns Your Water and Mineral Rights? Know Before You Buy

Planning to irrigate your new landscaping? Be sure you know your water rights before you divert water from a stream or irrigation ditch on your property. In the West, the right to take water for irrigation may belong to someone up or downstream from you, and your property's mineral rights may belong to a mineral developer.

As coal-bed methane developers move across Montana and Wyoming searching for methane deposits, many landowners are horrified to learn that their mineral rights belong to mining companies that have the right to build access roads and drill wells on their property. Frequently the only recourse landowners have in such situations is to make sure that the natural gas developers “do it right.” Still, enforcement of development regulations doesn’t eliminate impact; it only minimizes it. Best to make sure you own your mineral rights before you buy rural property.

Check with the county office where you plan to buy. Consulting with an attorney who specializes in western land use law is a very good idea too.
You've found the perfect property – out of town, secluded – the ideal place to build your dream home. The contractors have just poured the foundation when you discover that the gravel road to your place doesn't belong to the county. In fact, it's your neighbor's road, and it crosses his property before it gets to yours. Not only do you not have an easement; a dispute over water rights has created hard feelings between you and your neighbor. How much will he charge you to buy a legal easement to your property? And who's going to plow your stretch of road when winter snows drift in?

This scenario is common in developing rural areas where buyers believe that they have free and legal access to their property. Unfortunately, that's not always the case.

A common assumption is that all roads belong to the county. Often they don't. In fact, when roads come under review, counties frequently decide to stop providing maintenance. The trend in many rural counties is to decrease the number of roads a county maintains. New private roads that are part of a rural development are often not accepted as county roads.

Prospective buyers should check county records before signing the buy-sell agreement. If the county doesn't own and maintain the road leading to a prospective property, find out who's responsible for the maintenance. If you are in a subdivision without a homeowner's association, it's likely you will be responsible for maintaining and plowing the road.

Even if the county maintains the road, it pays to know where the road falls on the county's priority list. When it snows, school bus routes receive first priority. County officials frequently complain that new residents build in remote areas, then call to find out why the county hasn't plowed the road. Often it's because they've built where the school bus doesn't travel.

Closing Thoughts

Owning a “piece of the Rockies” is a deep and alluring dream. However, the price of developing one seemingly insignificant piece may be more than the region can afford when the cumulative effects are calculated. We all – native and newcomer alike – need to pitch in to protect the values that draw and keep us here. We must show restraint and consideration for the people and wildlife with whom we share the landscape. If we do, our reward will be the preservation of the West’s character and soul.
The Corporation for the Northern Rockies works for a sustainable future, where our children and grandchildren can grow up in safe and vibrant communities and enjoy a western landscape that is still open and intact. We accomplish this by:

- Training interested landowners about sustainable stewardship techniques
- Helping farmers and ranchers who are great stewards of the land become more profitable by marketing their products to lucrative niche markets
- Training real estate professionals in the practice of conservation real estate
- Promoting sustainable vacation, real estate, ranching and consumer choices
- Sponsoring annual Sustainability Fairs and public events that showcase sustainable concepts, products and services

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Together, we can sustain the beauty and traditions of the West.

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