



2023 ANNUAL REPORT



BUILDING OUR ALLIANCE

2023 was a memorable water year for the Gallatin River. Substantial winter snow raised hopes of a worry-free summer for streamflows and wildfires. A warm spring followed, quickly melting the snow, and our hopes of drought-free seasons ahead. Then substantial rain in June and August ensured bountiful water for the Gallatin - and a sigh of relief for all of us who rely on its cold, clean water throughout the year.

While the Gallatin did not experience an extensive algae bloom as in years past, 2023 marked the year that these blooms were officially recognized by the state of Montana as a threat to the future health of the river. Alarming as it may seem, a designation of this magnitude will provide opportunity and additional resources to determine the causes behind the past blooms and how we can address them most effectively, ensuring healthy seasons ahead for the Gallatin.

We do not take this lightly. We understand the significance of what the designation means, and intend to build and engage our alliance of strong partners and supporters like you, with unwavering diligence, to do what is needed for our community's treasure.

This report provides a snapshot of the power to influence the health of our outdoor assets with the support and investment

of an entire community. In the pages that follow, you will see the many ways the Task Force and our community of supporters go to battle for the Gallatin.

Our review of this year will highlight the innovative, science-backed projects and programs designed to improve the river's health and our quality of life, presenting the case for why our work is necessary, and how it can't succeed in a silo.

Moving the needle for the Gallatin is what drives our team, and our work. We are incredibly grateful for your engagement in our efforts and hope that you will continue to play a vital role, finding your own place in what we do for the river. The time is now; the Gallatin needs you.

Kristin Gardner, PhD
Chief Executive &
Science Officer



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Board Chair



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📷 Photography by Dave Pecunies

OUR VISION

A healthy Gallatin River watershed for future generations

OUR MISSION

To partner with our greater community to lead conservation and inspire stewardship of the Gallatin River watershed

2023 At a Glance

11

Restoration projects advanced

290,266

Gallons of water saved through conservation

39

Miles of the Gallatin River listed as impaired



GALLATIN RIVER IMPAIRMENT DESIGNATION

The middle segment Gallatin River, stretching from the Yellowstone National Park boundary to the confluence with Spanish Creek, has experienced unprecedented algal blooms in the summers of 2018, 2020, and 2022, and was designated as impaired for nuisance algae by the Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality (MT DEQ) in 2023.

“

The Task Force’s efforts go beyond water monitoring, and we value the work they do in the West Fork and other tributaries to address sources of pollution. Partnering with them has given us the ability to complete a beneficial use assessment on the Gallatin; leading us to advance a nutrient threshold study, looking at the TMDL loads on the Gallatin, and giving us more insight to causes behind algae blooms.”

Darrin Kron, MT DEQ

How We Got Here

2018, 2020, 2022	Widespread nuisance algae blooms observed in the Gallatin
2022	Ongoing resource constraints delay regular MT DEQ reporting to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for waters that have recently become degraded
MARCH 2022	Gallatin River Task Force, Upper Missouri Waterkeeper, American Rivers, Greater Yellowstone Coalition, and Trout Unlimited submit a legal petition to MT DEQ to list the Gallatin as impaired
APRIL 2023	MT DEQ makes a preliminary decision to list the Gallatin as impaired
MAY 2023	EPA approves the MT DEQ decision

What’s Next?



EXPAND RESEARCH

Monitoring efforts have been expanded to understand why algae blooms are occurring and what levels of nutrients and environmental conditions are healthy for the Gallatin.



DEFINE HEALTHY LEVEL OF POLLUTANTS

Monitoring results will be used by the MT DEQ to develop Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), or healthy levels of pollutants or conditions, like temperature.



UNDERSTAND AND ADDRESS ALGAE BLOOMS

The Task Force and MT DEQ will continue to make significant investments to understand and address algae blooms.



DEVELOP A PLAN

The Task Force will guide the development of a restoration plan to address drivers of algae growth.

How We are Being Proactive with Community Partners:

- Upgrading & expanding community-wide wastewater treatment
- Implementing the Gallatin River Restoration Strategy to restore 90+ degraded sites along the Gallatin River corridor
- Developing the West Fork Master Plan identifying projects to preserve, restore, and enhance the West Fork drainage, including the Middle Fork and South Fork.
- Advocating for Wild & Scenic Designation



OUR PROGRAM STRATEGY & PROJECTS

Our Watershed Approach to conservation is what sets the Gallatin River Task Force apart. We are supported by distinct strategies rooted in the unique values of our community.

Program Strategy

WE ARE GEOGRAPHICALLY FOCUSED

As the only nonprofit focused solely on the Upper Gallatin River, our work is tied to a distinct hydrologic boundary.

WE ARE COLLABORATORS

Our work is community-based and community-driven. We are proactive conveners, seeking broad involvement, inclusivity, and collaboration with partners.

WE FIND SOLUTIONS

With more than 20 years of robust data, our work is based on sound science, aided by strategic watershed plans providing a roadmap to address priority water resource goals.

WE TAKE ACTION

We leverage resources and combine technical and financial capacities from a variety of partners, allowing us to implement on-the-ground projects and programs that benefit our rivers, community groundwater, and quality of life.

Where We Work

MIDDLE FORK PROJECT 5

Low-Tech Process Based Restoration
Status: 100% Design & Permitting

WEST FORK WETLAND ENHANCEMENT

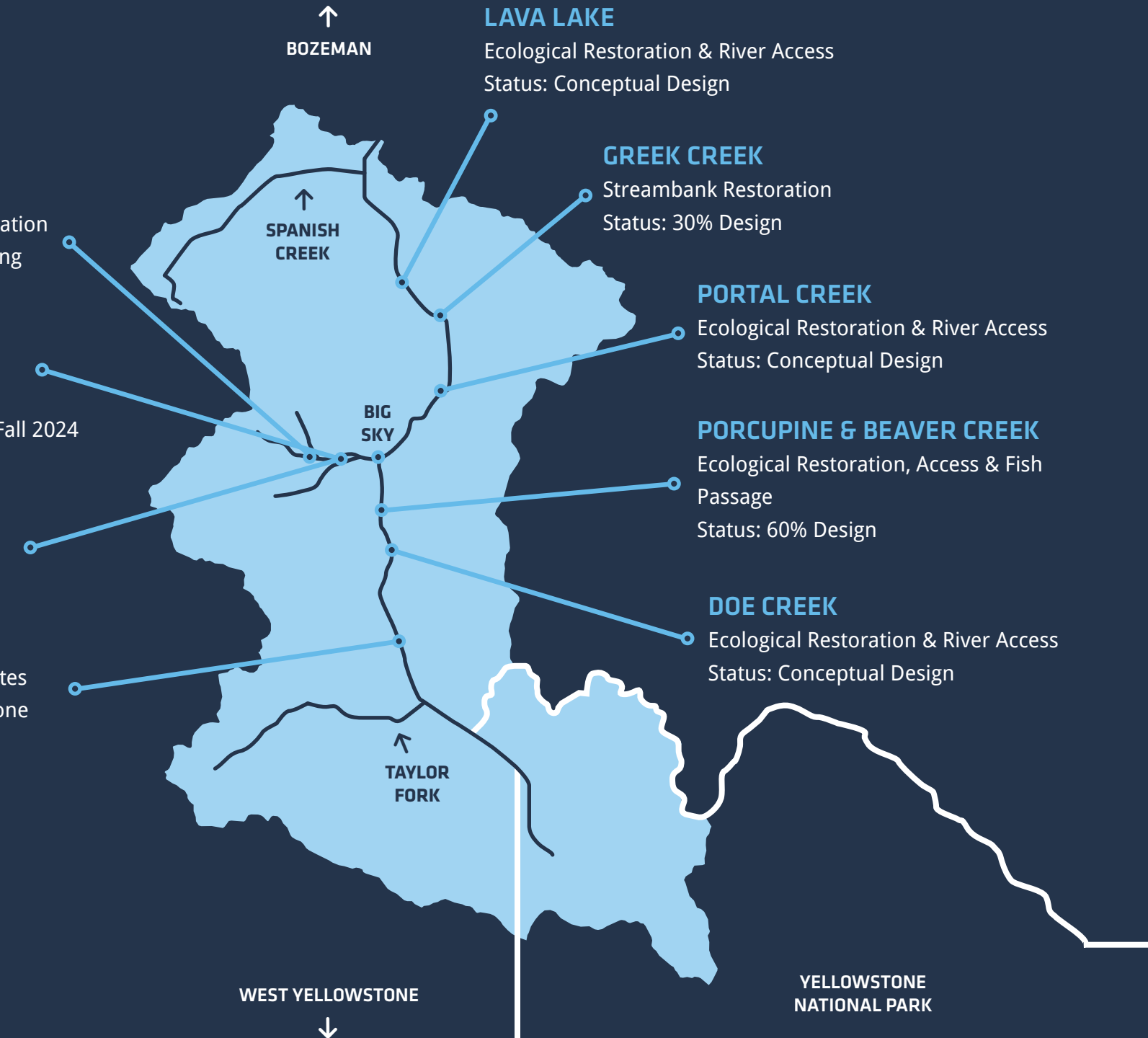
Wetland Treatment System
Status: Construction Spring or Fall 2024

WEST FORK WETLAND ENHANCEMENT 2

Status: Conceptual Design

RIVER ACCESS PARKING

Gallatin River access along 21 sites from Spanish Creek to Yellowstone National Park Boundary
Status: 90% Design





PARTNER, PROGRAM & PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Partnership Highlight: Big Sky Sustainable Watershed Stewardship Plan

2023 marks 5 years since the adoption of the community's blueprint for sustainable water resource solutions focused in 3 areas:

- 

ECOLOGICAL
HEALTH OF
RIVER SYSTEMS
- 

WATER
SUPPLY AND
AVAILABILITY
- 

WASTEWATER
TREATMENT
AND REUSE

Together with community partners, the Task Force accomplished several beneficial water infrastructure advancements, including:

- 1

Formation of the Gallatin Canyon Water & Sewer District
- 2

Big Sky Water & Sewer District's Water Resource Facility Expansion
- 3

Yellowstone Club's Snowmaking Reuse Project

STAKEHOLDERS WILL RECONVENE IN 2024 TO
UPDATE THE PLAN


Program Highlight: Water Conservation


In 2023, Big Sky's first Water Conservation and Drought Management Plan was completed with local water providers. The plan presents strategies to conserve and sustainably manage Big Sky's water supply and safeguard the future of the Gallatin River.



SUMMER IRRIGATION CREATES A 160% INCREASE IN WATER DEMAND

The Task Force is leading community-wide water conservation strategies, with a focus on reducing summer demand, including:

- 

Expanding outdoor rebates like turf conversion, Water-Wise plants, drip irrigation
- 

Establishing a Drought Dashboard with recommendations for community-wide drought response
- 

Building a community landscape partnership

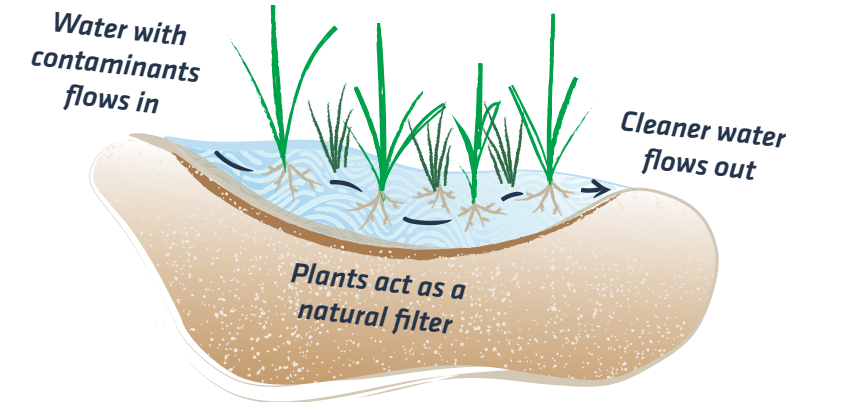
Project Highlight: West Fork Wetland Enhancement

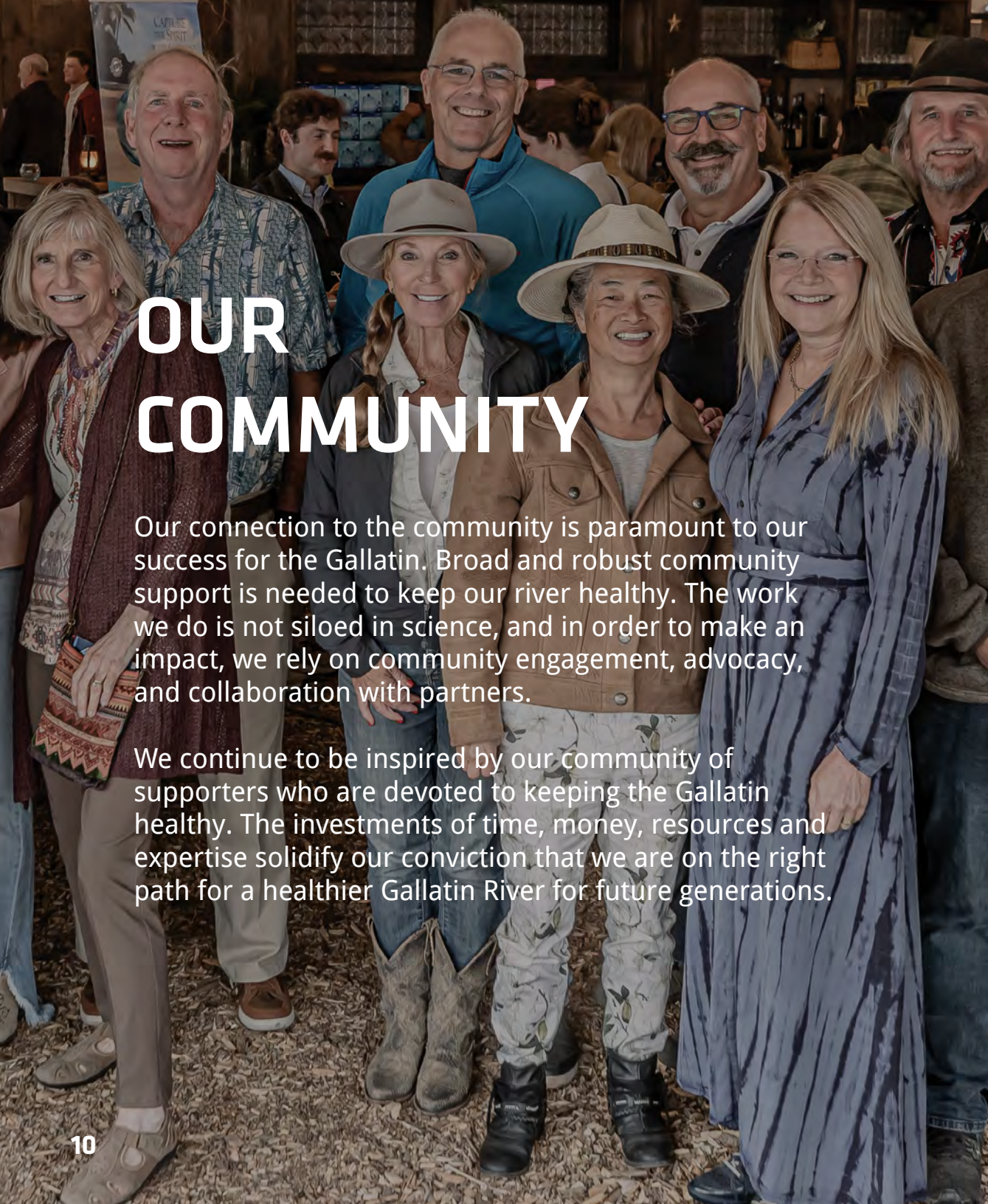
Science confirms that more nitrogen causes more algal growth in the Gallatin. Wetland treatment systems are natural, innovative solutions that replicate the processes occurring in natural wetlands to remove pollutants.

CHALLENGE:
The West Fork and the Gallatin River both exhibit nuisance algae blooms that threaten the health of trout and aquatic species.

SOLUTION:
The Task Force finalized plans to redirect groundwater flow over a 16,570 square foot treatment wetland, **removing 80% of the nitrogen in groundwater** before it enters the West Fork. Construction is expected to be completed by 2024.

HOW WETLANDS WORK:





OUR COMMUNITY

Our connection to the community is paramount to our success for the Gallatin. Broad and robust community support is needed to keep our river healthy. The work we do is not siloed in science, and in order to make an impact, we rely on community engagement, advocacy, and collaboration with partners.

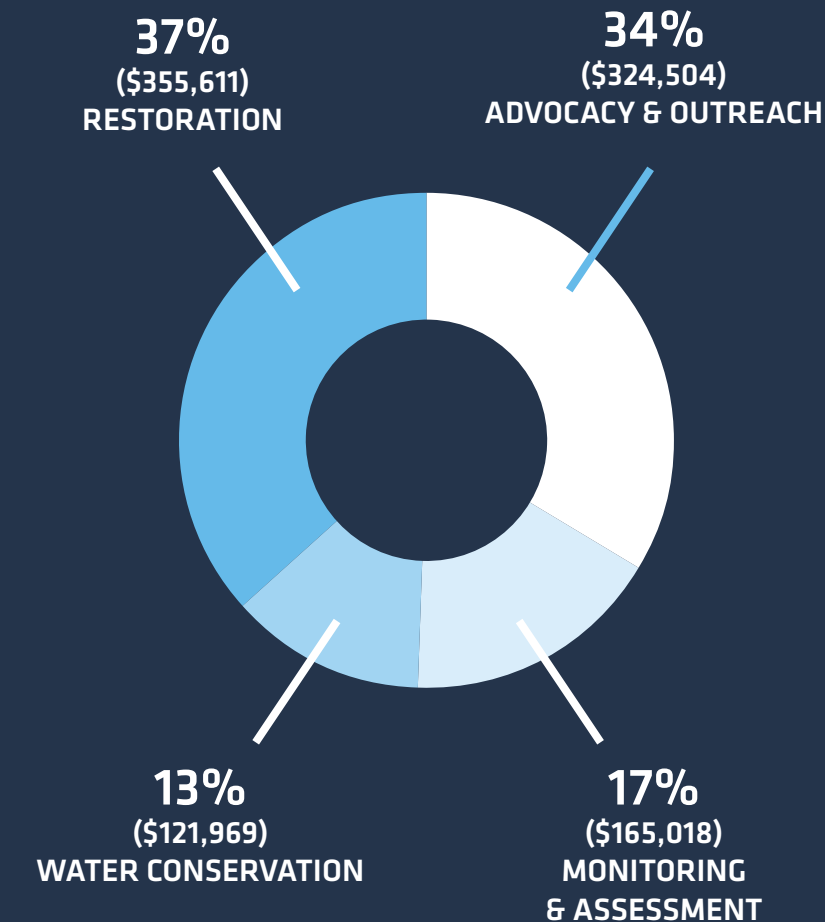
We continue to be inspired by our community of supporters who are devoted to keeping the Gallatin healthy. The investments of time, money, resources and expertise solidify our conviction that we are on the right path for a healthier Gallatin River for future generations.

Your Support

- 💧 We are supported by **123 members** of varying levels
- 💧 We are supported by **413 donors** who make our work possible
- 💧 We have **support from nearly every state** in the country and Canada
- 💧 Roughly **130 volunteers** engaged in our 2023 Monitoring & Restoration work
- 💧 We engaged an audience of over **3,900 individuals through digital platforms**, brought 12,000 users to our website, and registered over 16,000 pageviews
- 💧 Hooked on the Gallatin brought together a crowd of nearly **300 attendees**, our largest to date
- 💧 **Hooked on the Gallatin 2023 raised over \$246,000** net for river conservation, benefitting the Gallatin River Task Force program work

76 CENTS OF
EVERY DOLLAR
WENT DIRECTLY
TO ADVANCING
VITAL
PROGRAMMING

Program Investments



FINANCIALS

Changing the course of the Gallatin’s health takes science-backed information and intentional programs and projects that improve our river and our community’s drinking water. Progress demands investment and resources that match the level of need.



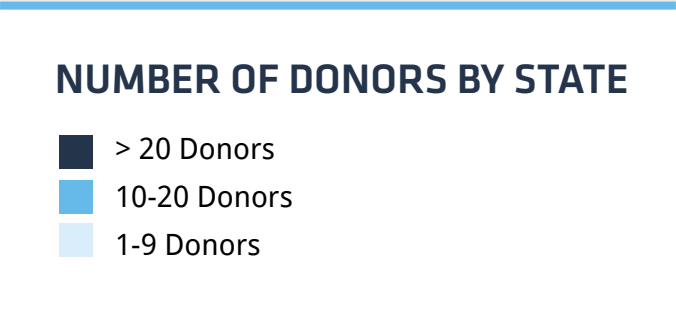
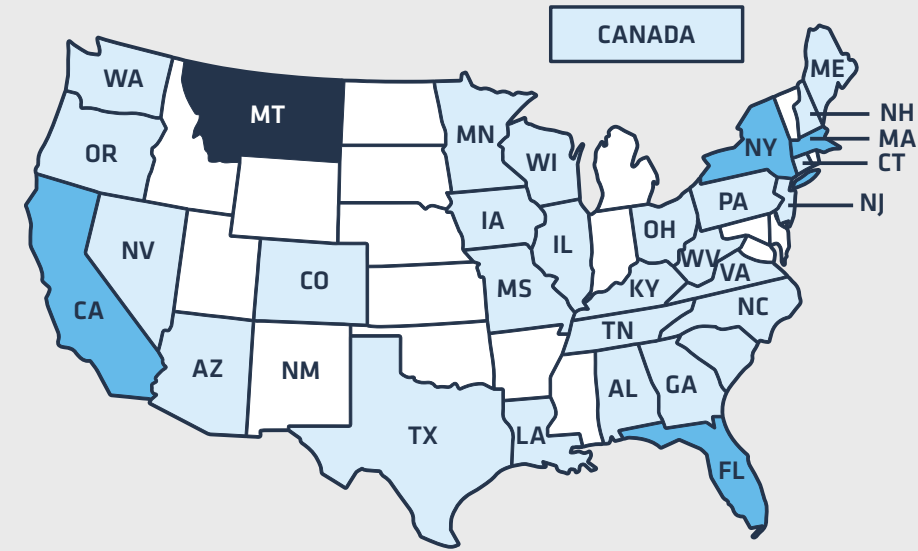
REVENUE	AMOUNT	PERCENTAGE
Grants	\$820,274	63%
Events	\$218,624	17%
Individual Donors	\$166,216	13%
Earned Revenue	\$45,579	3%
Foundations	\$32,314	2%
Corporations	\$25,922	2%
TOTAL	\$1,308,929	100%



EXPENSES	AMOUNT	PERCENTAGE
Programs	\$967,102	76%
Administration	\$161,183	13%
Fundraising	\$142,484	11%
TOTAL	\$1,270,769	100%

2023 DONORS

Where our donors come from



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Rich Addicks
Mark Baker
Al & Diane Bartzick
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Heather & Kevin Budd
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\$25,000 +

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Gallatin River Guides

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- 🍷 Caddisfly Member
- 🍷 Golden Stonefly Member
- 🍷 Salmonfly Member
- 🍷 Headwaters Society Member



\$1,000 TO \$2,499

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Martha Crocker
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Steve & Carolyn Jones
Steve Sweningson
Suzanne & Andrew Oehler
Thomas Von Lehman
TroutRoutes

“

As a board member and a volunteer, I invest my time with the Task Force because I hope to make a difference - even if it is a small one - in our mission to protect the Gallatin.”

JeNelle Johnson



\$500 TO \$999

Tim Kunkel
Matthew & Tracy Smith
Greg & Laurie Nelson
David Woodburn
Elizabeth Burke
Cyndee & Stan Button
Phoebe & Richard McEldowney
William & Karen Brace
Eric Ladd
Ryan Kunz
Sara Pfaff
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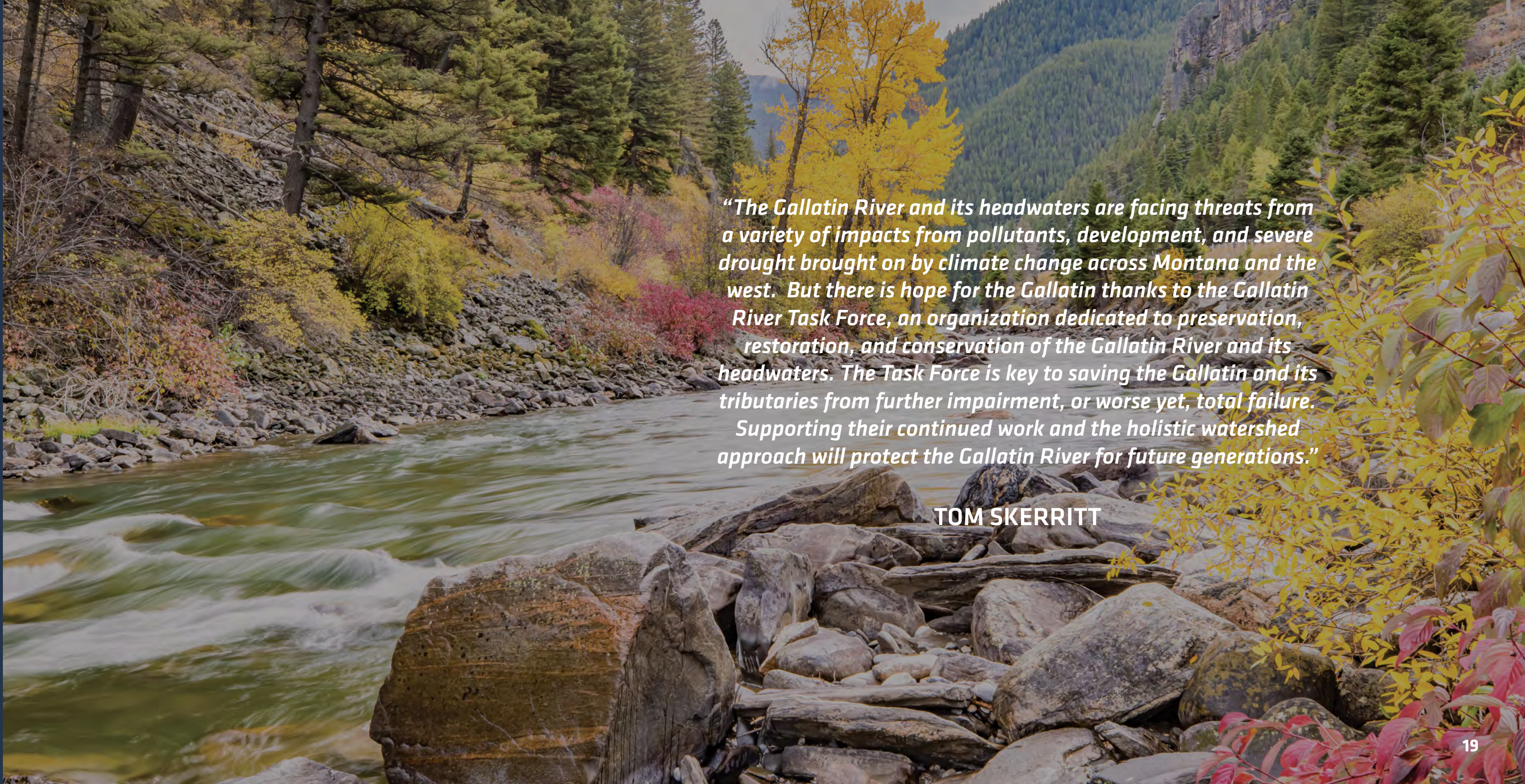
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Casey Maher



“You can’t teach someone to love this river. You can’t teach the love of being on the water, or fishing, spending time with your family, or understanding its value naturally and otherwise, but you can expect that people should want to protect it.”
Rick Donaldson

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Mike Wilcynski
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Tim Sullivan
Debra Roti
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Jennifer Mohler
Rick O'Connell
Sarah Craig
Kayla Darini
Alan Pawlick
Jessica Martin-z
Rosie Barndt
Brian Hurlbut



“The Gallatin River and its headwaters are facing threats from a variety of impacts from pollutants, development, and severe drought brought on by climate change across Montana and the west. But there is hope for the Gallatin thanks to the Gallatin River Task Force, an organization dedicated to preservation, restoration, and conservation of the Gallatin River and its headwaters. The Task Force is key to saving the Gallatin and its tributaries from further impairment, or worse yet, total failure. Supporting their continued work and the holistic watershed approach will protect the Gallatin River for future generations.”

TOM SKERRITT



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