



Centennial Valley Association – October 2023

2023 CVA Staff Thank You



Clare, Anna, Shannon

The Centennial Valley Association celebrated turning 20 years old in June, and we were so fortunate to have an amazing staff Team that helped make the start to our 20th year successful. CVA was joined by nine team members throughout various parts of the field season from May through October. Please help us thank Clare Ols, Erika Nunlist, Shannon Wilkey, Taylor Jackson, Cody Albrecht, Anna Haight, Nathan Clark, Emma Grusing, and Ian Scott for their efforts this year!



Taylor, Cody, Erika

Clare joined CVA for her sixth field season in the Centennial Valley, as the Invasive Species Coordinator

and interim Field Coordinator. She helped with season preparations and active weed management efforts, data analysis and reporting, grant writing, and seasonal staff training, all while studying for (and passing!!) the Montana State Bar Exam. CVA appreciates Clare's drive, "jack-of-all-trades" support, and love of the Centennial Valley. See more about Clare's time with CVA on page 2.

Erika led the Wildlife and Range Rider Program for her fourth season. Erika continued to provide knowledge, experience, and effective communication, garnering trust for the program near and far. She has participated in regional conversations around the effectiveness of range riding, and continues to provide valuable insight into metrics and tools to analyze. CVA appreciates Erika's dedication, passion, and flexibility for the program and Centennial Valley.



Emma

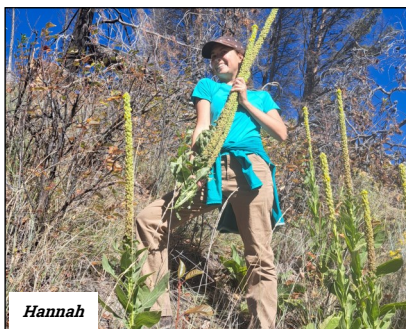
Shannon joined the Team for her second field season as CVA's lead Field Technician. Shannon stepped into a leadership role with the Invasive Species Management Program, as well as collecting hydrologic data for the Water Reports, coordinating revegetation efforts this fall, and developing social media posts. CVA appreciates Shannon's willingness to grow into bigger roles, her sense of humor, and her talent for finding treasures in the sage.



Nathan, Ian

Taylor came back to the Centennial Valley for her second season as a Range Rider through mid-August. She continued to build relationships with the community and advance her skills as a Range Rider to increase trust amongst participating producers. CVA appreciates Taylor's positive outlook, willingness to participate across programs, and her artistic eye that captures beautiful photographs and drawings.

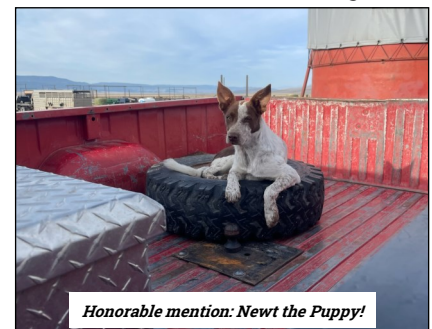
Cody, Anna, Nathan, Emma, and Ian joined CVA for their first season on the Team this year. Cody joined the Team as a Range Rider with previous experience in Wyoming, advancing the program's skills with cattle monitoring. Anna, Nathan, Emma, and Ian were the TNCVA Field Technicians at various points throughout the field season, increasing



Hannah

capacity and accomplishments for both the CVA and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). CVA appreciates Cody, Anna, Nathan, Emma, and Ian for jumping right into their work, bringing great attitudes, experiences, and ideas to projects and programming.

Finally, CVA would like to thank James Waxe and Hannah Robles, TNC, for their support on invasive weed management, revegetation efforts, and lending a hand whenever needed. Thank you!!



Honorable mention: Newt the Puppy!

To preserve traditional ranching as a way of life in the Centennial Valley, and to maintain quality open space, wildlife habitat, water quality, and wildlife migration corridors as they exist today for future generations.

CVA Program Updates

Anne Blackwood



Water & Drought Awareness Program

The Centennial Valley experienced a relatively wet August, September, and start to October! This is great news for the start of the 2024 Water Year, which began on October 1st, especially since the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is [predicting a warmer and drier winter](#) due to El Niño. As of October 13th, the Jefferson River Basin is 79% of median for precipitation and 67% of median for snow water equivalent (SWE) for this new water year. The Red Rock River subbasin is reporting 86% of median for precipitation and 120% of median for SWE!

CVA's network of rain gauges reported precipitation accumulation throughout the valley floor from the end of May to the end of September. We hope to expand out [automated rain gauge network](#) more broadly in the Centennial Valley next season. If this interests you, please let us know! We appreciate guidance on where data gaps are, as well as any funding resources to help us purchase additional gauges for the network.

If you have any questions, suggestions or want to subscribe to the monthly Water Reports, contact drought@centennialvalleyassociation.org.

Wildlife and Range Rider Program

Our 2023 Range Riding and Wildlife season has flown by, but things are winding down. The producers we work with have weaned and most will be out of the Centennial Valley in the next couple weeks, if they haven't shipped out already. We had minimal livestock-predator issues this season, with the first conflict occurring only a few weeks ago. One of the Valley's producers had two grizzly bear calf depredations just days before weaning. Game cameras put out by the producer captured photos of a sow with two yearling cubs at the carcasses. Fortunately, the herd was gathered for weaning almost immediately after the conflict, and no further issues have been documented.

As always, game cameras have been a big asset to our program. New cameras this season made a huge difference in capturing quality and informative photos. We hope that all of you have enjoyed the pictures that were shared through the range riding reports as much as we have! Wildlife activity has really slowed down with the onset of fall, although pronghorn and deer are still regularly observed throughout the Valley... at least until the snow flies!



Reflecting on another great season, it wouldn't be possible without all the amazing support that we continue to get from the producers, community members, landowners, and others. We would also like to send a special shout out to the Range Riders Cody and Taylor this season! THANK YOU EVERYONE!

-Erika Nunlist, Wildlife Program Coordinator

Note from Clare to Community

Farewell (for now) to CVA - after being a part of the Centennial Valley Association since 2018, I am sad to announce that I am officially moving away from my role as Invasive Species Coordinator. This spring and summer, I successfully completed law school and passed the Montana Bar Exam. I am now moving on to a new adventure as an attorney for Urick Law Firm in Stanford, Montana, where my work focuses on water rights, agricultural law, property law, and estate planning.

I truly cannot express just how much the Centennial Valley community means to me, and I am so very grateful for the opportunity to work with and learn from so many great folks over the last six years. I will definitely stay in touch - and can't wait to be out volunteering for CVA Spray Days next season!

Clare started with CVA as a Conservation Intern with the Montana Conservation Corps in 2018. She returned to the CVA in the summer of 2019 as the Invasive Species Coordinator, where she maintained that role through this year, as well as acting as our Camera Trap Technician (2019) and interim Field Coordinator (2021/2023). Clare has been **instrumental** in the success of CVA's programs. From coordinating field projects, expanding programmatic vision to include restoration through reseeding, actively writing grants to fund all of CVA's programs, training seasonal staff, and building trust within the community, Clare has ensured that CVA has the foundation to achieve its mission for future generations. Thank you, Clare, for your ongoing dedication, great ideas, friendship, and love for CVA, the Centennial Valley, and community. We will miss you and wish you the best on your new adventure!



-Clare Ols

-CVA Board of Directors

CVA Program Updates (continued...)

Invasive Species Management Program

Invasive weed management season has now come to a close with the colder weather coming soon. The CVA and TNC field crews did a great job this season in monitoring and treating the invasive weeds in the valley. On the last day that CVA managed invasive weeds, the crew was collecting hoary alyssum seed heads in Alaska Basin in a little bit of snow!



Shannon Wilkey

Management efforts for the later half of this season included both chemical and mechanical treatments. In addition to general day to day work, CVA hosted three spray days in our Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) areas, hosted a weed week in August, where crews cover the entire valley floor, and a final weed week in September, where the field crew focused on treating Canada and musk thistle patches. Priority invasive weed species that we focused heavily on were spotted knapweed, houndstongue, whitetop, hoary alyssum, Canada thistle, and common mullein. In total, the TNCVA field crew monitored and treated about 170-acres!



Native geranium. RT Cox

To finish out the season, weather permitting, CVA will make a final push for fall reseeding effort on bare spots on Long Creek. The goal of reseeding is to decrease bare soils available for invasive species to establish on, while increasing the biodiversity of the plants for both better habitat and forage. This project is part of the WHIP grant that the CVA received in late 2019 for six priority wildlife habitat areas in the Centennial Valley. In addition to weed management and reseeding in the WHIP areas over the years, they have also been monitored throughout the season to track the condition and infestation levels of invasive weeds that are found in those locations.

Finally, the CVA and TNC crews assisted the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest's Madison Ranger District conduct Early Detection, Rapid Response (EDRR) weed management to prevent weed species from spreading into bareground soils within the burn, as well as on equipment lines and routes to the fire. Thankfully, the crew did not discover too many patches of invasive weeds! Canada thistle was the primary offender, with some spotted knapweed and hoary alyssum identified. The area was traversed using UTVs, ATV, and by truck, and nearly 5-acres of invasive weeds were treated, and many more acres monitored!



Native penstemon. RT Cox

The CVA field crew will work hard to winterize equipment before the official end of their season on October 27th, as well as finish any data entry and mapping that is needed, ensuring the program is ready to go for next year's season!

-Shannon Wilkey, Lead Field Technician



Shannon Wilkey

Giving Tuesday 2023

CVA kicked off its 20th year of organizational status at the end of June this year! Reflecting on the last year, few years, and even at the start of the organization, the CVA Board of Directors had so much to be thankful for! CVA started as a main disseminator of information, a link for the community to learn about what is happening in the Centennial Valley amongst the public, private, and nonprofit partners in the area. Now, CVA has grown to have an amazing Team that contribute to multiple programs that mitigate wildlife conflicts with people and cattle, reduce the spread and impact of invasive weeds on rangelands and wildlife habitat, restore native vegetation, monitor drought impacts, and produce newsletters and blogs to continue to disseminate information across the community.

As we move towards 2024 and the next twenty years, CVA wants to ensure that we maintain the level of services we provide in the Centennial Valley, while expanding programs to meet ever changing needs. On **November 28th**, please consider supporting CVA with your time, a donation, or a gift during #GivingTuesday, an annual event that focuses on giving back to the people, communities, and organizations you care about. Funds raised will go towards CVA's Team and programs that benefit the local, community-based efforts in the Centennial Valley. Thank you for your consideration and enjoy the holidays!

-Kara Maplethorpe, Executive Coordinator



Scott Jackson

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Partner Updates

The Nature Conservancy in Montana

Our 2023 field season is starting to wind down, with five seasonal workers remaining at the headquarters—all of which will be departing the Centennial Valley by November 1st.

Our team spent the bulk of its time on cheatgrass and noxious weed control efforts. We had a productive field season, with 2,000-acres of cheatgrass mapped, ½ mile of wildlife friendly fence completed, and thousands of noxious weeds killed. Our last big project for the year is to helicopter-spray about 1,300-acres of cheatgrass, in addition to boom-spraying roadsides throughout the valley. The majority of cheatgrass patches that are located away from roadsides occur on steep, south-facing slopes with rocky soils—so please keep any eye out and report any new or unknown infestations. We are ramping up our cheatgrass control efforts throughout southwest Montana and will likely treat more acres next year, both in and around the valley.

A big thanks goes out to all the seasonals, community members, agency/ NGO partners, and landowners for another great field season.

-James Waxe, Land Steward & Science Manager,
james.waxe@tnc.org

Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

The Refuge completed no-till drilling of native grass and wildflowers in its 5-acre restoration plot - now the wait is on. It will be a couple of years before many of these perennials begin to fully showcase their presence and flower. Wildflower species were strategically selected to provide structure and constant flowering throughout all seasons to benefit pollinators.

Opening day of waterfowl season saw the Refuge with a good number of hunters harvesting many ducks. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks wardens were on hand to assist hunters on opening weekend and expect to be on hand periodically for the upcoming hunting seasons opening soon. The Refuge thanks the wardens for their hard work and presence in the valley and on the Refuge.

Autumn colors have been strong late September through early October, and have brought many visitors to view and photograph the leaves.



Bill West

The Refuge would like to give thanks to its Cooperators for a wonderful season of grazing. Additionally, the Refuge also gives thanks to the CVA's Range Rider program for helping the Refuge grazing program, and to all of its partners in the valley. Thank you all for everything you do!

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Dell, MT 59724
info@centennialvalleyassociation.org



James Waxe

USFWS Upper Missouri Headwaters Conservation Area

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) opened a public scoping period on a proposal to create a Missouri Headwaters Conservation Area. Upon completion of the scoping period, the Service will consider next steps, which may include the development of a Land Protection Plan.

If created, the proposed Conservation Area (CA) would authorize the US Fish & Wildlife Service to work with willing landowners to purchase up to 250,000 acres of conservation easements within a proposed 5.7-million-acre area in Southwest Montana (portions of Beaverhead, Madison, Deer Lodge, and Silver Bow counties). The conservation easements would be funded with federal Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) and no fee title acquisition would be authorized. Conservation easements in this area would help conserve important wildlife habitat and migration areas for species such as grizzly bear, pronghorn, elk, mule deer, and bighorn sheep while also protecting open space and keeping working lands working.

The scoping period will run until November 27th. If you would like to share your views and/or add comments to the proposal, you can submit written comments, and/or communicate with your county commissioners about the proposed CA. For more information about the Conservation Area, click [here](#).

To submit official written comments:

Mail: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Attn: Ben Gilles,
922 Bootlegger Trail Great Falls, MT 59404

Email: MOHWCA@fws.gov



Taylor Jackson

www.centennialvalleyassociation.org
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Follow us on Instagram @centennialvalleyassociation

Partner Updates (continued...)

University of Utah – Taft-Nicholson Center



Our season has come to an end, the pipes are blown out and the doors are boarded up. We had a great season and are already looking forward to our return next spring. A big thanks to all the community members who participated in our Science Wednesday lecture series, as well as our new Nature Nights documentary series. This year, 16 guest speakers were welcomed to the Centennial Valley and we showed five documentaries throughout the summer. Please let your friends and colleagues know that applications for next year's Artist-in-Residence program are being accepted on the [website](#). We hope you all "Winter Well" and we can't wait to see you in the Spring.

-Mark Bergstrom, Director of the Taft-Nicholson Center, mark.bergstrom@utah.edu



Beaverhead Watershed Committee & Conservation District

Grant contracts have finally come in. We just signed the Grasshopper Creek contract, so we'll finally start work on the reinforcement of a berm holding mine tailings in place just below Bannack Park. We have a contract to finish the Red Rock watershed restoration plan, and we'll be reaching back out to people about what projects they'd like to see to improve water quality in the Red Rock. River bank stabilization, off-stream cattle watering, riparian grazing plans, mine cleanup, fish habitat projects, anything you've got, we're interested in hearing about. We're currently advertising for an engineer to design a nutrient reduction wetland on Lower Stone Creek. We just signed another 5-year agreement with BLM to work on water quality and quantity projects in the area.



The Conservation District is still doing a great job running the Kidd boat check station, and is currently hiring an Invasive Annual Grasses Coordinator through a partnership with local and regional groups. We're also still working on resolving the wilderness study area issue in Beaverhead County, focusing right now on Hidden Pasture and Bell-Limekiln. We want locals to be aware of this effort, and we want your input.

-Zach Owen, Watershed Coordinator, zach@beaverheadwatershed.org

Ruby Valley Conservation District

Our Kids River Resource Day was held a few weeks ago for the 19th year in a row! We were pleased to bring in presenters to teach over a hundred kids about a variety of natural resources such as freshwater, fish, macroinvertebrates, bears, and much more. Although it was a rainy and chilly day at Giem Ranch out of Twin Bridges, our eleven presenters and the student chaperones did a great job of keeping the day fun and engaging. We are so grateful to everyone who helped out with this event, and can't wait to do it again next September!

We also have had a couple of other events to wrap up the year! In late September, we had a follow-up presentation on Grizzly Bears after our Wildlife Speaker Series event was rained out halfway through in July. Cecily Costello from FWP and Kim Johnston from People and Carnivores did a great job speaking about grizzly bear biology/behavior and bear safety respectively, and we had a decent turnout. Then, a week later, we partnered with the NRCS and the Madison Conservation District to bring another land management workshop to the community. The workshop consisted of three



presentations on invasive plants, rotational grazing and wildfire protection, and led to some great conversations with the audience afterwards.

We are beginning to wrap our public-facing events this year, but we'll be back with new events and information on volunteer opportunities before you know it! You can stay updated on our upcoming plans by signing up for our monthly newsletter. Not only will you get updates on all of the RVCD's upcoming plans, but you will also get updates on local drought and rainfall levels, relevant headlines on local conservation, and our monthly contribution to The Madisonian's Natural Resource News! Sign up by [clicking here](#), keep an eye on our [website](#), or follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) for similar updates and fun photos.

-Tim Weighart, Big Sky Watershed Corps Member, bswc@rvcd.org

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2023 Hunting Season

In fall, bears are active for longer periods as they consume more food in preparation for hibernation. The Centennial Valley has grizzly bears throughout the landscape. Per [Montana FWP](#), here are some ways you can remain Bear Aware this hunting season:

- Carry bear spray and be prepared to use it immediately.
- Look for bear sign and be cautious around creeks and areas with limited visibility.
- Hunt with a group of people. Making localized noise can alert bears to your presence.
- Elk calls and cover scents can attract bears.
- Bring the equipment and people needed to help field dress game and remove the meat from the kill site as soon as possible.
- If you need to leave part of the meat in the field during processing, hang it at least 10 feet off the ground and at least 150 yards from the gut pile. Leave it where it can

be observed from a distance of at least 200 yards.

- Upon your return, observe the meat with binoculars. If it has been disturbed or if a bear is in the area, leave and call FWP.

In addition to being Bear Aware, please remember to respect private property, thank a landowner, sign in at all Block Management boxes, and practice fair chase.



Friends of the CVA

CVA strives to build and utilize working relationships with numerous agencies and organizations, such as:

- Federal, State, and County Agencies
 - The Nature Conservancy
 - Taft-Nicholson Center
 - Future West
- Madison Valley Ranchlands Group
- Big Hole Watershed Committee
- Heart of the Rockies Initiative
- USFWS Partners Program
- Montana Watershed Coordination Council
 - Cross Charitable Foundation
 - Greater Yellowstone Coalition
 - Defenders of Wildlife
 - Livestock Loss Board
 - Missouri Headwaters Partnership
 - Friends of Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and the Centennial Valley
- Fish, Wildlife and Parks WHIP Program
 - Montana Native Plant Society
 - Western Landowners Alliance
 - And Many Others!

2024 Master Hunter Program

The Montana Master Hunter Program (MHP) is accepting applications for the 2024 program through November 30th, 2023. Led by One Montana, the MHP is for hunters who want to continue to improve and hone their skills, build relationships with landowners to aid their wildlife management goals, and be an advocate for conservation and wildlife. Classes will be held in Bozeman (March), Missoula (April) and Kalispell (May). To apply or learn more: <https://www.mtmasterhunter.com/how-to-apply>



Lunchtime Conservation Conversations

Join Montana Watershed Coordination Council on occasional Wednesdays at noon for an hour of learning, sharing, and connecting over lunch. These informal online gatherings begin with a short presentation by one of MWCC's network partners on a topic relevant to local watershed conservation. The rest of the hour is dedicated to questions and discussion. If you miss it, conversations recorded and uploaded to their [website](#).

Upcoming Lunchtime Conservation Conversations include What's Next for MWCC in 2024 with Executive Director Amy Seaman on November 15th, and Building a Watershed Group from the Ground Up with panelists from watershed groups around Montana on December 13th.



CVA Board Members

Yvonne Martinell, Chairwoman
Peggy Dulany & Andrew Anderson (Proxy)
Kevin Crowe & Tassi Duffner (Proxy)
Jerry Scheid (Advisory)
Jim Berkey (Advisory)

Scott Huntsman
Ed Wolfe
Mel Montgomery
Mark Bergstrom (Advisory)
Bill West (Advisory)

CVA Committees

Weeds: Scott Huntsman
Wildlife: Yvonne Martinell, Bill West
Hunting: Jerry Scheid, Scott Huntsman
Fundraising: Jim Berkey, Bill West, Andrew Anderson