

Montana Association of Land Trusts Hires New Executive Director

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The Montana Association of Land Trusts – a group of 11 land trusts working on private land conservation and voluntary conservation agreements throughout the state – has hired the group's first executive director.

Glenn Marx, former publisher of a weekly newspaper in Whitehall, assumed full-time duties as association executive director starting in July. Marx is also a former staffer for governors Stan Stephens and Marc Racicot and for former congressman Ron Marlenee, and has extensive natural resource policy, legislative and political experience.

The Montana Association of Land Trusts is comprised of 11 private, nonprofit members (Prickly Pear Land Trust in Helena, Gallatin Valley Land Trust in Bozeman, The Trust for Public Land with its Montana headquarters in Bozeman, Flathead Valley Land Trust in Kalispell, Montana Land Reliance in Helena, Five Valleys Land Trust in Missoula, Bitter Root Land Trust in Hamilton, The Conservation Fund with its Montana office in Missoula, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation in Missoula, Vital Ground in Missoula and The Nature Conservancy of Montana). The 11 land trusts work with private landowners to obtain conservation easements that maintain working farms and ranches, protect water quality, protect wildlife habitat, preserve open space and retain the values that make Montana such an attractive place to live, work and recreate.

“From a land conservation and land trust perspective, we're at a critical juncture in Montana,” said Rock Ringling of the Montana Land Reliance. “We've seen a rapid acceleration in large-scale residential development in the state, and we've got a narrow window of opportunity to protect values that are important to Montanans.”

“To meet these new challenges, the Montana Association of Land Trusts have hired an executive director to help coordinate our activities, serve as a focal point for policy development and help represent us legislatively,” said Andy Baur of the Prickly Pear Land Trust. Marx will be administratively attached to the Prickly Pear Land Trust and will work out of the Prickly Pear Land Trust office when in Helena. “We'll also be looking at broad education, communication and outreach programs and seeking to strengthen and create partnerships to help private landowner conservation in Montana.”

Land trusts negotiate voluntary agreements with landowners that restrict commercial development and potential housing subdivisions on the property. In essence, land trusts acquire, and then retire, development rights of the property. Conservation easements have potential federal estate tax and federal income tax benefits for landowners.

Land trusts also are active on local or county open space bond initiatives and some land trusts have active trails and outdoor recreation programs.

Montana land trusts have assisted private landowners in conserving over one million acres in the state since the early 1980s.

Marx, 50, worked for Montana Congressman Ron Marlenee from 1981 to 1987 as press secretary and then as chief of staff. Marx served as campaign manager for Marlenee's successful re-election effort in 1988. Marx then moved to Helena and worked for Governor Stan Stephens from 1989 to 1991, where he was natural resource policy advisor and deputy chief of staff. He served as campaign manager for Stephens briefly before an illness forced Stephens to drop his bid for re-election. Marx then served as campaign manager for gubernatorial candidate Marc Racicot in 1992, and in Racicot's first term of office was natural resource policy advisor and policy director.

In 1997 Glenn and his wife, Terri, purchased the Whitehall Ledger, a weekly newspaper in the community of Whitehall, located 26 miles east of Butte. After nine years, the Marxes sold the Ledger in April 2006. They will continue to reside in Whitehall.

"This is a terrific opportunity for me to work on issues that are vital now and will impact Montana for generations into the future," said Marx. "Montana is a special place, and I'll get a chance to help protect the attributes and values that make Montana so special."

(Glenn can be reached by calling 490-1659 or at malt@jeffersonvalley.net)