

# Overview of the Ravalli County Open Lands Bond Program

July 21, 2016



# Grassroots effort led to Open Lands Bond initiative

pre-2005

- Growing concern by Bitterroot Valley citizens about ongoing loss of agricultural lands and wildlife habitat

01/2005

- Ravalli County Right to Farm and Ranch Board and Bitter Root Land Trust commissioned a study by Larry Swanson on the impacts of agriculture on the Bitterroot Valley

06/2005

- Study completed: “Economic Impact of Agriculture in the Bitterroot”
- Documented loss of ag land and associated effects on economy
- Highlighted voluntary public funding for private land conservation as an important conservation tool for the Bitterroot Valley

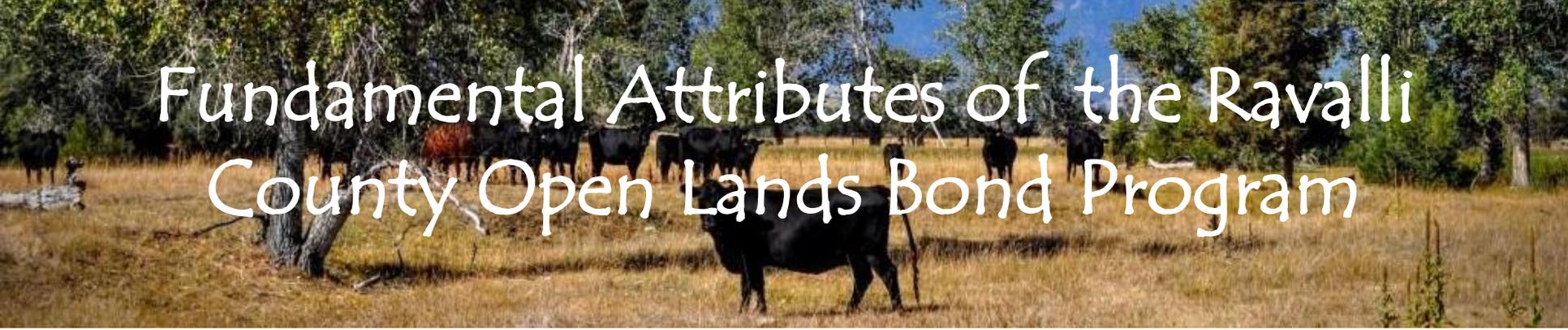
7/25/06

- Ravalli County Commissioners unanimously approve placing Open Lands Bond on ballot

# Ballot initiative – November 7, 2006

“Shall the Board of Ravalli County Commissioners be authorized to issue and sell general obligation bonds of Ravalli County solely for the purpose of preserving open lands in Ravalli County by purchasing land, conservation easements, and other interests in land from willing land owners for the following purposes: manage growth, preserve open lands, protect water quality of streams and the Bitterroot River, maintain wildlife habitat, protect drinking water resources, ...”

Approved by a margin of 58% to 42%



# Fundamental Attributes of the Ravalli County Open Lands Bond Program

- ✓ Voluntary
- ✓ Landowner-driven
- ✓ Supports private property rights
- ✓ Encompasses wide variety of public benefits

# Key milestones in establishing the OLBP

**Nov. 7, 2006**

Voters approve  
"Open Lands"  
General  
Obligation Bond

**Feb. 26, 2007**

BCC establishes  
the Open Lands  
Board (Resolution  
2037)

**May 7, 2007**

BCC approves OLB  
by-laws  
(Resolution 2104)

**Nov. 5, 2007**

BCC approves the  
guidelines and  
application  
materials for the  
OLBP

**Dec. 5, 2007**

BCC formally  
establishes the  
Open Lands Bond  
Program  
(Resolution 2256)

**Sept. 1, 2009**

Completion of  
first OLBP  
conservation  
easement (Wood  
Family Ranch)

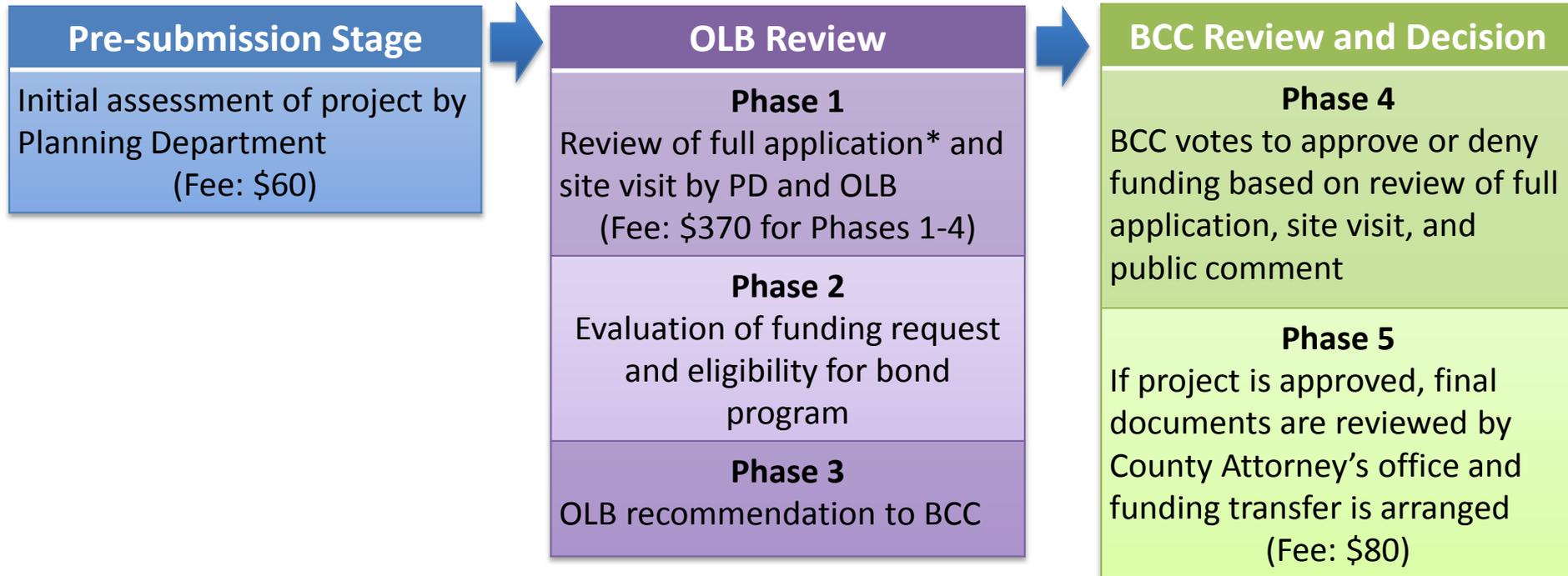
# Open Lands Board (as of April 2016)

Member Name	Membership Type	Term End Date
Drew Blankenbaker	At large member	12/31/16
Rob Johnson	At large member	12/31/17
Nat Sturgis	At large member	12/31/18
Albert Babel (Ag Operations)	At large member	12/31/17
Sharon Schroeder (Ag Operations)	At large member	12/31/18
Katharine Stone (Wildlife Biology)	At large member	12/31/18
Alan Maki (Hydrology)	At large member	12/31/18
Kent Myers	Conservation District Representative	12/31/16
Jim Ellingson	Right to Farm and Ranch Representative	12/31/16
Al Pernichele	Right to Farm and Ranch Representative	12/31/17
Paul Moore	Weed Board Representative	12/31/18
Penney Howe-Canton	Planning Board Representative	12/31/16
Bob Cron	Park Board Representative	12/31/17
Katrina Mendrey (Extension office)	Ex-Officio Member	No Term Limit
Tonia Bloom (BRLT)	Ex-Officio Member	No Term Limit

# Landowner/Land Trust partnership is crucial

- Landowner selects a qualified Land Trust that is willing to hold a conservation easement on landowner's property
- Landowner and Land Trust work together to define the landowner's long-term vision for his or her land
- The Land Trust determines if the proposed easement project and funding request are a good fit for the OLBP
- The Land Trust works closely with the OLB and the Landowner throughout the application process
- Once the conservation easement is in place, the Land Trust holds the easement in perpetuity and ensures that the provisions of the easement are upheld

# Application procedure for OLBP funding



\*The full application includes the following:

- Completed Project Scoring Worksheet
- Project Scoring narrative/documentation
- Funding Worksheet
- Title report and Mineral Rights Statement
- Complete description of property and surrounding area

# Project Scoring Worksheet

Category (items)	Possible points	Description
General Attributes (4)	16	Size, water rights, future home sites, weed management
Agricultural Resources (8)	30	Soils, irrigation, productivity, management practices, proximity to other farms/ranches
Natural Attributes (8)	30	Wetlands, wildlife, aquatic and riparian habitats, management practices, proximity to other important habitats
Additional Community Benefits (3)	10	Scenic values, compliance with public policy, public access
Proposed Funding (3)	9	Landowner contribution, funding partners (matching), joint neighborhood easements
Special Attributes (N/A)	5	Special or exceptional characteristics of the project
<b>Total Possible</b>	<b>100</b>	

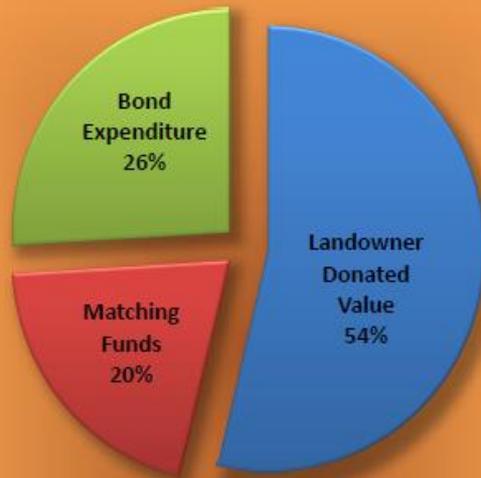
# Results as of July 21, 2016

Category	Value	Comments
Completed Projects	18	Includes 1 pending project with funds committed
Total Acreage	4,824 acres	This line item, and those below, exclude the above-pending project data, and only provide information on completed, finalized projects.
Fair Market Value	\$34,831,500	
Conservation Easement Value	\$12,967,946	
OLBP Expenditures	\$3,363,562	Average OLBP expense: \$697/acre
Match to OLBP	\$2,636,975	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-RMEF</li> <li>-NRCS Farm Bill (FRPP, ALE)</li> <li>-Travelers for Open Lands</li> <li>-Montana Access Public Lands Fund</li> <li>-Mule Deer Foundation</li> <li>-Wild Sheep Foundations (MT, National)</li> <li>-Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital</li> <li>-Sapphire Lutheran Homes</li> <li>-MT Fish &amp; Wildlife Conservation Trust</li> <li>-Local citizens &amp; private family foundations</li> </ul>
Landowner Donated Match	\$6,967,409	
OLBP Funds Remaining	\$6,636,438	

# Breakdown of costs and funding

Photo courtesy of BRLT

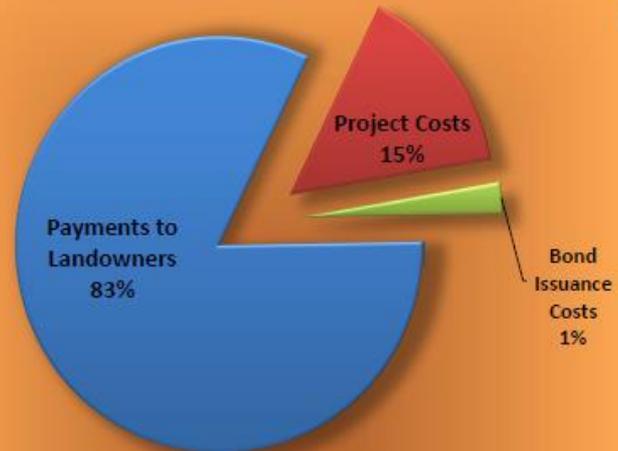
## Conservation Easement Funding



Landowner Donated Value	\$6,967,409
Matching Funds (includes public and private sources)	\$2,636,975
Bond Expenditure	\$3,363,562
<b>Total Conservation Easement Value</b>	<b>\$12,967,946</b>

\*Figures are approximate as of 7/21/2016

## Bond Expenditure Allocation



Payments to Landowners	\$2,774,116
Project Costs (includes appraisals, legal fees, title work, baseline studies, project application and closing fees)	\$507,969
Bond Issuance Costs	\$81,477
<b>Total Bond Expenditures</b>	<b>\$3,363,562</b>

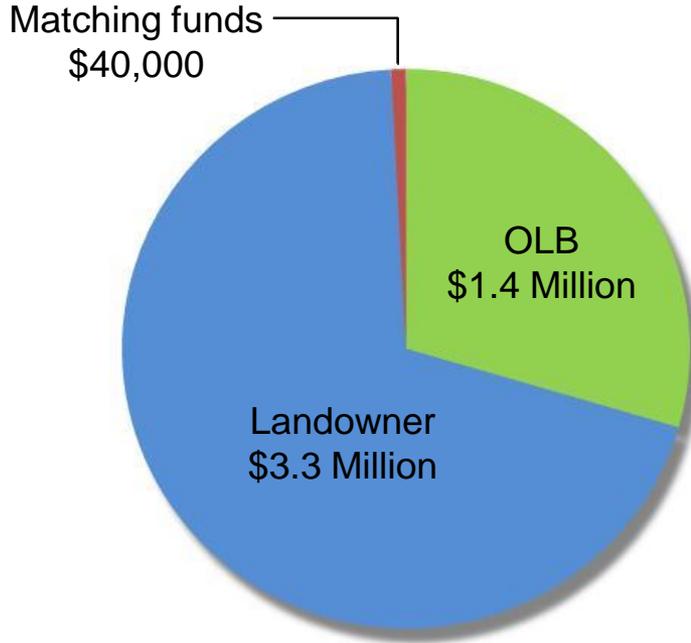
\*Figures are approximate as of 7/21/2016

Figures are approximate as of July 21, 2016

# Conservation Easement funding trends over time

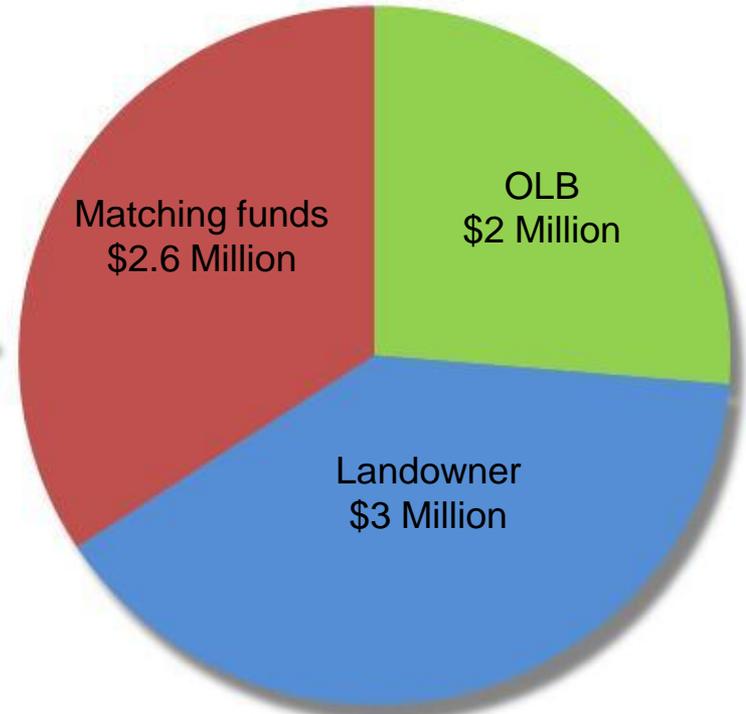
Photo courtesy of BRLT

## 2006-2010



Total = \$4.67 Million  
(6 conservation easements)

## 2011-2015



Total = \$7.6 Million  
(13 conservation easements)

# Direct and indirect benefits of OLBP (1/2)

- ✓ Nearly 5,000 acres of open lands preserved
- ✓ Effectively leverages taxpayers dollars for open land conservation
- ✓ Mechanism for acquiring or protecting lands for public recreation (e.g., Steve Powell Park; Lazy J Cross Ranch hunting access)
- ✓ Important tool for landowners seeking to preserve open lands during transitions (e.g., Farrell Ranch)
- ✓ Promote neighborhood conservation easements (e.g., Burnt Fork drainage, Corvallis agriculture corridor)
- ✓ Catalyst for creation of neighborhood land stewardship programs (e.g., Burnt Fork and Corvallis Weed Management Cooperatives)

# Direct and indirect benefits of OLBP (2/2)

- ✓ Habitat preservation – benefits to wildlife, fisheries, scenic values, and associated activities
- ✓ Helps to maintain and enhance the drivers of a diverse economy in Ravalli County
  - Agriculture (\$41 million/year in 2010)
  - Recreation (\$37 million/year for hunting & fishing in 2013)
  - Tourism
  - Real estate values
- ✓ Reflects positively on our community

# Thank You!



Photo courtesy of BRLT