

The Year in Review November 2024



We are thrilled to share with you the latest developments in our mission to support and expand community-guided and holistic approaches throughout Montana, and beyond.

Firstly, we would like to express our gratitude to you, our donors, and our Steering Committee for your continued generosity and dedication to this work. The progress we have made this year is 100% made possible through your support!

Life in the Land now consists of six films, as this past year we released the episodes: *The Mighty Few (of the Crow Nation)* and *The Upper Yellowstone River*. The project now also consists of over 30 podcast episodes, a Discussion Guide, and Curriculum. In 2024, we also produced podcast episodes on *Housing in Montana* and *Food Security in Montana (Dec 2024 release)*. All content is available for free to the public. Find the full project at www.LifeintheLand.org.

Growing our Audience: Our films have been utilized by over 100 community organizations, groups, agencies, universities, and more. We've reached audiences at local, state, national, and international levels - both in person and virtually. Most recently, the films were featured on Local Access TV in Billings & Missoula areas, reaching over 50,000 households!

Our online presence continues to expand as entities like the MT Department of Natural Resources & Conservation and the Office of Public Instruction have included our content on their websites.

Community Events: We've seen a surge of interest in our Film Screening & Community Conversations, enabling us to co-host six events across the state in 2024. It is evident that people are craving community connection and we are grateful to facilitate these opportunities for thoughtful dialogue and to remind folks what is possible when we work together.

Story Workshops: Additionally, we've hosted five Story Workshops this year, educating participants on the craft of impactful communications, and the value in uplifting the story of themselves, their organization, and of their community.

Film Festivals: To date, the Life in the Land films have been recognized in 23 Film Festivals, in Montana, Wyoming, Oregon, New York, Ireland, Italy, India, Mexico, and elsewhere. Most recently, two of the films were featured in the Montana International Film Fest in Billings: *The Mighty Few* & *The Upper Yellowstone River*!

See Impact #'s to the Right>

Outreach by the Numbers 2021 - 2024:

Full Film Views Online:
23,500

Youtube views of film clips: **20,500**

Over **360,000** people reached on social media

In-Person Screenings & Post-Film Discussions:
4,100+ people
89+ Events in
15 States Nationally &
10 Countries

Podcast Downloads:
10,700+

Film Festivals:
23

Our Year of Film Screenings & Community Conversations

ALL made possible thanks to YOUR support!



Gatherings To Strengthen Community

"It's evident that people are hungry to gather as a community and to discuss how we are an interactive part of our landscapes, looking at realistic challenges and effective responses," says Lara Tomov, Project Director. "It's also refreshing to be reminded on screen, as well as in the discussions after the films, what productive dialogue and action can look like between people who have varied perspectives."



The Upper Yellowstone River

The [Billings Public Library](#) hosted a screening of *The Upper Yellowstone River* film followed by an engaging community discussion exploring the social and environmental dynamics of the Yellowstone River as it applies to the Billings region. With nearly 60 attendees, the event drew a lot of interest from the Billings community and demonstrated the desire folks have for opportunities to connect and learn about their place.

We also had a SOLD OUT 90 seat screening of this film in Missoula in November. The panel after the film featured local experts working in areas of river conservation, Native involvement with land management, ranching, & the outdoor recreation industry. Several things were brought to light about the challenges, complexities, and the call to engage with & support locally-led efforts.

In these and other screenings of this film, it struck us how many people said they "never thought of it like that", based on information in the film or from the panel. We see this as a positive sign that perspectives are being broadened and informed.



Photo Credit: Jamie Kirby, DNRC Community & Urban Forestry Program

The Mighty Few - Wyola

We started off 2024 with screening the *Life in the Land: The Mighty Few* film in the featured community of Wyola (Crow Nation). The film looks at the grassroots, community development work taking place here, in ways that connect culture, identity, health, and economic opportunities. Nearly 60 community members came together for a potluck and to enjoy the film. The community has been using the film to further their fundraising efforts and inform those near and far of the inspiring work taking place.

Your contributions supported screenings of this film at **Little Big Horn College** on the Crow Reservation, where community leaders and elders spoke after the film. We also hosted a screening at the **Billings Public Library**, free for attendees. A heartfelt panel discussion after the film about Indigenous-led Community Development featured Wyola community members, Triia (for Indigenous Artisans), and the Native American Development Corporation. At these & other screenings of this film, audiences commented that the story is empowering, while bringing attention to the realistic challenges that need to be addressed. Those who are from the featured community have shared the pride that the story invokes, and other audiences have shared how there are relatable elements that can apply to their own community's challenges and opportunities.

See **Full List** to right>

FULL LIST OF 2024 EVENTS

General Outreach:

- All films available through OPI, for all Montana high schools & middle schools
- All films utilized in university classes in Montana, Wyoming, California, including UM's Natural Resource Conflict Resolution Program
- Old Salt Festival, tabling, Helmsville, MT
- Story Workshops with the MT Watershed Coordination Council, High Divide Collaborative, Women in Ranching, Big Sky LEAD Youth Forum, and others
- Content shared at Serve Montana Symposium, hosted by Governor's Office of Service, Helena, 200 attendees
- MT Federation of Public Employees Education Conference, tabling
- MT Forest Collaboration Network annual statewide gathering

The Mighty Few screenings:

- Gathering for the featured community of Wyola, MT
- Big Sky LEAD forum, high school students from around Montana
- Conference: *Community Engagement for Just Energy Transitions*, West Virginia
- Little Big Horn College, Crow Agency, 400+ views
- Billings Public Library, with panel on Indigenous-led Economic Development
- *Eugene Environmental Film Festival*
- *The Mighty Few* and *The Upper Yellowstone River* films were both featured at the MT International Film Festival in Billings, MT
- Award winner at the Hibel Cultural Center Film Festival in Washington

The Upper Yellowstone River screenings:

- High Divide Collaborative, attendees from Montana & Idaho
- Environmental Film Festival at Yale
- Billings Public Library, with panel, 60 attendees
- Women in Ranching gathering, with participants from around the country, Gardiner, MT
- Sold out show at The Roxy in Missoula with a panel discussion featuring folks from Clark Fork Coalition, UM's Native American Natural Resource Program, Pintler Mountain Beef, and Thunder Hammer Fly Fishing, 90 attendees

Teaching community resilience through the Life in the Land curriculum

In 2023 & 2024, a variety of universities & high schools in Montana and beyond have utilized the films in their classrooms. Life in the Land now offers free curriculum for high schools, colleges and universities, and adult learners. It includes a general lesson plan designed to accompany any of the six films, with three location-specific plans highlighting the Blackfeet Nation, Mighty Few (of the Crow Nation), and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. These three lessons were created in partnership with **Montana's Office of Public Instruction** to ensure the plans meet Montana's **Indian Education for All** content standards.

Lessons are designed to develop a student's critical thinking and problem solving skills while encouraging them to apply concepts to their own community and local landscape.

"Integrating these films into our Natural Resources Conflict Resolution program at the University of Montana has provided students with valuable

insights into the stewardship successes championed by partners across the region. These films have inspired students to advance collaborative stewardship in their communities and landscapes, while honoring connections to land held by Montanans across the state," says Travis Anklam, Co-Chair of the certificate program.

Most recently, our curriculum has been used at **Montana State University** in their Natural Resources Ecology course and Principles of Environmental Engineering course. The curriculum will also be made available statewide through the **Montana Digital Academy**. We are excited to see how applicable our curriculum is across a range of subject areas, including Social Studies, Civics, Environmental Science, Agriculture, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Economic Development, and more!

Thank you to Shauni Seccombe, who led the creation of the curriculum.

Email info@storiesforaction.org to request a copy.



Feedback folks have shared:

"The content and the dialogue that it sparks, reminds us that no matter what happens on the political stage, we are all integrated into these ecosystems together."

- Rebecca Ramsey, Swan Valley

"This project is awesome and will really help elevate the voices across our landscape."

- Emily Harkness, High Divide Collaborative

"Students really connect to the story narratives - the videos delve into the complexity of these issues but in an accessible way."

- Montana Professor

"[I enjoyed] having the chance to meet important community members and hear their perspectives, and to have the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives."

- Event Participant

"Life in the Land engages in a process which recognizes that all of us are connected to where we live. It brings a chance to work towards more connection with nature and human nature. It gets us the tool that uses science and publicity in ways that are effective to galvanize local communities."

- Cliff Montagne, BioRegions International



Advancing this work into the future

Life in the Land now consists of six films, 30+ podcast episodes, a Discussion Guide, Curriculum, and an informational website, all available for free. We are hearing feedback that the content itself, and the physical gatherings and dialogue that the films catalyze, is impactful and necessary in our current times. While we will not be producing any new content in 2025, we want to continue to put the time and effort into the outreach work, so that more folks can learn about and engage with the content...and therefore we can help to advance the community-guided and holistic approaches that this project advocates for. We have immense gratitude to you all for allowing this work to take place and take hold.

Your continued support will allow us to carry this work forward.

Fundraising for 2025

We are currently raising funds to meet our goal of **\$10,000**, of which we have **\$2,000** secured. Your support will enable us to continue the following throughout 2025:

- **Offer our content for free**, including all films, podcasts, lesson plans, and the informational website.
- **Co-host film screenings** with expert panel discussions and facilitated community conversations.
- **Expand our reach & impact** by continuing to take the time to research & contact organizations, community groups, academia, and other entities that can utilize this content, as well as allow us to table at public events & conferences.
- Potentially begin research for producing new content in 2026.

The Story Workshops will continue to be offered through Stories for Action (the production entity of *Life in the Land*), at a discounted rate for non-profit organizations, public school classrooms, & community groups.

Visit **www.LifeintheLand.org/Sponsor** for info or contact Lara Tomov at:
info@StoriesforAction.org

Options are available for tax-deductible qualifying contributions.

Immense gratitude to you, our supporters, for making this work possible!

2022 Supporters:

Crocus Foundation
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World Wildlife Fund
MT Forest Collaboration Network
The Jim Scott Family
Marina Weatherly
MT DEQ's Abandoned Mine Lands Program
Montana Conservation Corp
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The Milton Ranch
Northern Great Plains Joint Venture
The Common Ground Project
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Heart of the Rockies
MT Watershed Coordination Council
Ranchers Stewardship Alliance
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2023 Supporters

Montana Film Office - Big Sky Film Grant
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MT Watershed Coordination Council
MT Forest Collaboration Network
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Bill Long & Billie Miller
Blackfoot Communications
Northern Great Plains Joint Venture
Sarah Roubik
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2024 Supporters

Headwaters Foundation (Podcasts)
Anonymous Donor
BioRegions International
MT Watershed Coordination Council
MT Forest Collaboration Network
The Milton Family Ranch
Foundation for Community Vitality
Sandra Lambert
Bill Long & Billie Miller
Heart of the Rockies Initiative
Northern Great Plains Joint Venture
Winnett ACES
Rodney Frey
Gary Whited
Fernanda Robert
Kathie Messer

Reach out to Project Director, Lara Tomov, for more info
or to share comments & feedback:
(406) 531-3283 info@storiesforaction.org

Find the Life in the Land project at: www.LifeintheLand.org
Podcasts found on the *Stories for Action* series, available on Apple, Spotify, or iHeart

Thank you to the Life in the Land Steering Committee:

Cliff Montagne [BioRegions International], Bill Milton [Milton Family Ranch], Bill Long [Solid Ground Consulting], Kascie Herron [Wild Montana], Shauni Seccombe [LITL Outreach & Education Associate]