

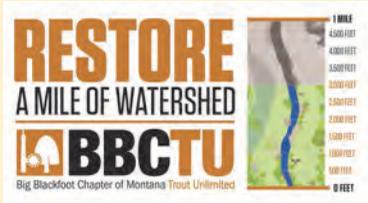
## Celebrating Our Watershed

This past August, after a year's delay because of 2017's fire activity, we finally gathered to formally celebrate our 30th Anniversary. We were humbled at the collection of people--including our many members, current and past Board Directors, landowners, local businesses, sponsors, contractors, consultants and agency partners who joined us in celebrating this great watershed. We live, work, ranch, fish and recreate in a unique and beautiful Blackfoot River valley.



## Restore-A-Mile

We kicked off our Restore-a-Mile Campaign this summer and thanks to your generosity we've been able to restore over 3,000 feet. With your help and continued support, we can reach a full mile and more. \$25 buys you one foot of important habitat! **Please Join Us!**



To learn more about our efforts, how you can help and how to support a healthy and sustainable Blackfoot River watershed at

[www.BBCTU.org](http://www.BBCTU.org) or

[www.facebook.com/BigBlackfootChapterofTroutUnlimited](https://www.facebook.com/BigBlackfootChapterofTroutUnlimited)

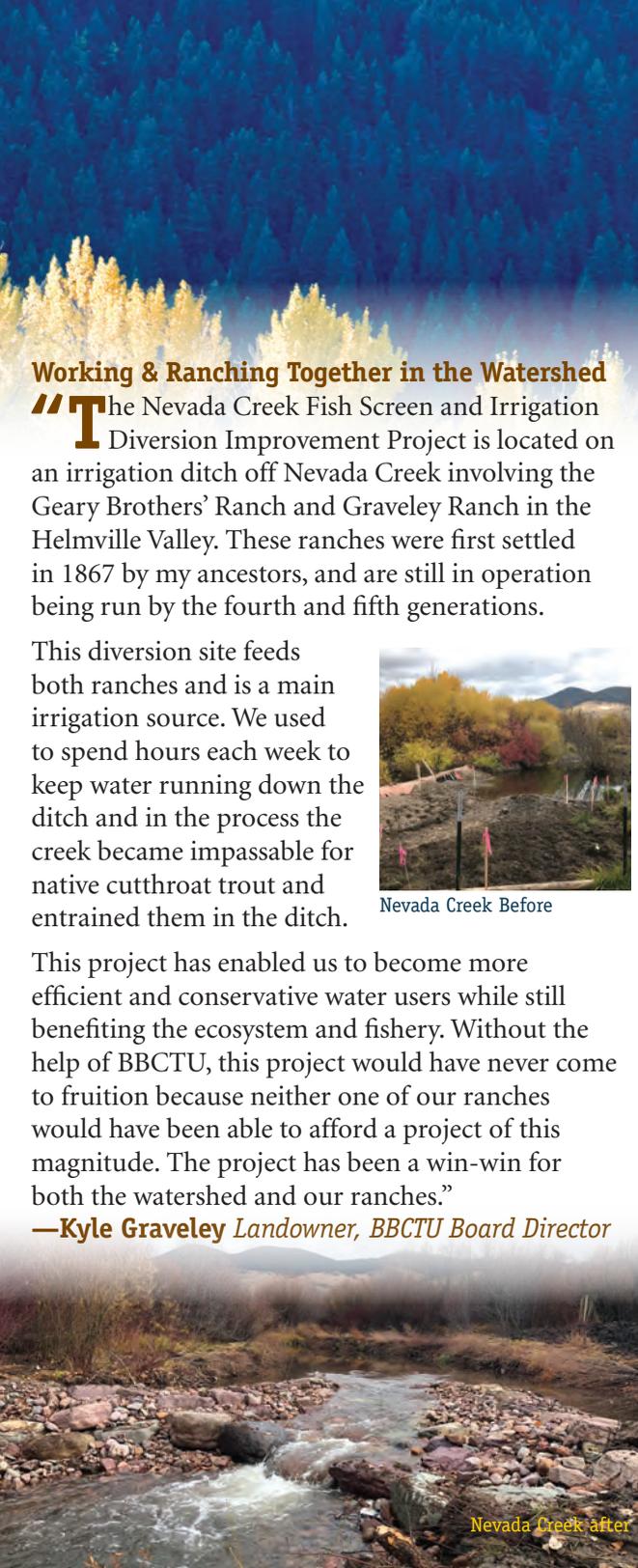
**BigBlackfootChapterofTroutUnlimited**

**THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR SUPPORT!**



Big Blackfoot Chapter of Montana Trout Unlimited

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## Working & Ranching Together in the Watershed

**T**he Nevada Creek Fish Screen and Irrigation Diversion Improvement Project is located on an irrigation ditch off Nevada Creek involving the Geary Brothers' Ranch and Graveley Ranch in the Helmville Valley. These ranches were first settled in 1867 by my ancestors, and are still in operation being run by the fourth and fifth generations.

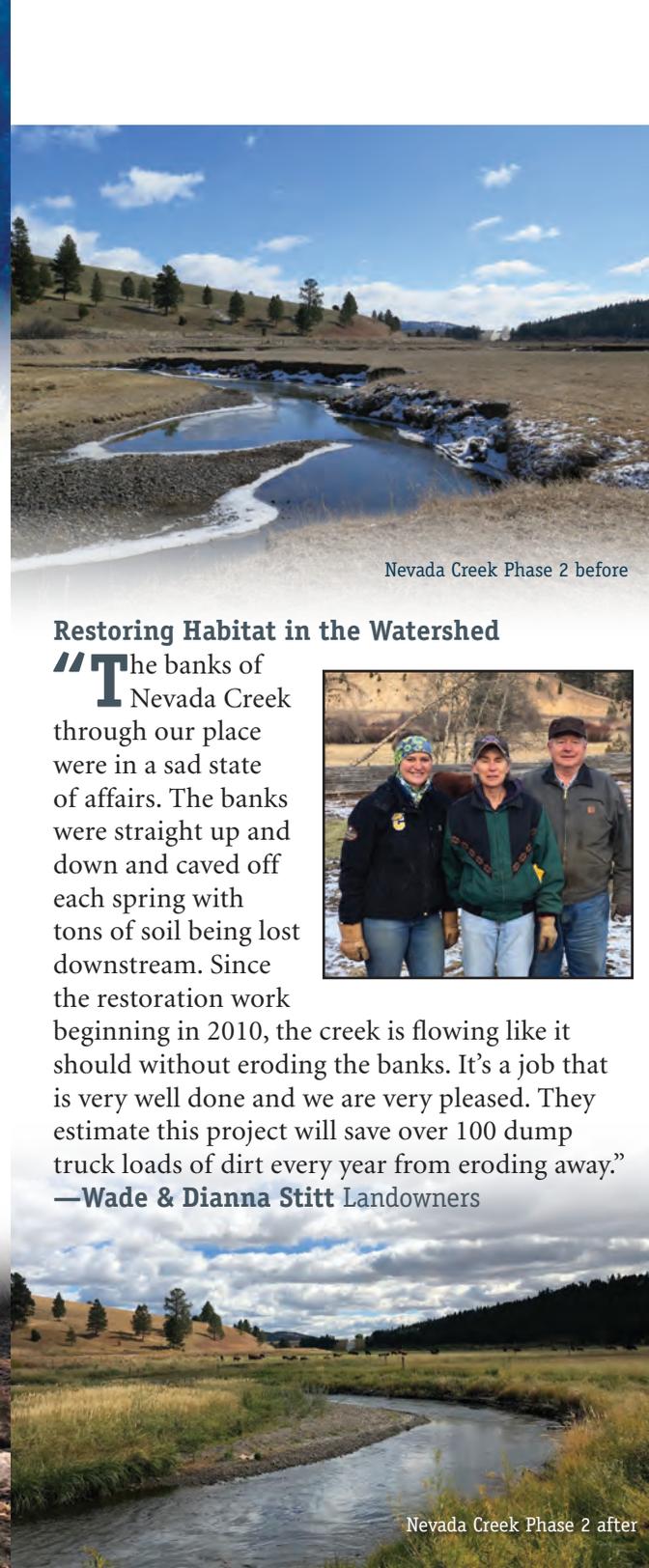
This diversion site feeds both ranches and is a main irrigation source. We used to spend hours each week to keep water running down the ditch and in the process the creek became impassable for native cutthroat trout and entrained them in the ditch.



Nevada Creek Before

This project has enabled us to become more efficient and conservative water users while still benefiting the ecosystem and fishery. Without the help of BBCTU, this project would have never come to fruition because neither one of our ranches would have been able to afford a project of this magnitude. The project has been a win-win for both the watershed and our ranches."

—**Kyle Graveley** Landowner, *BBCTU Board Director*



Nevada Creek Phase 2 before

## Restoring Habitat in the Watershed

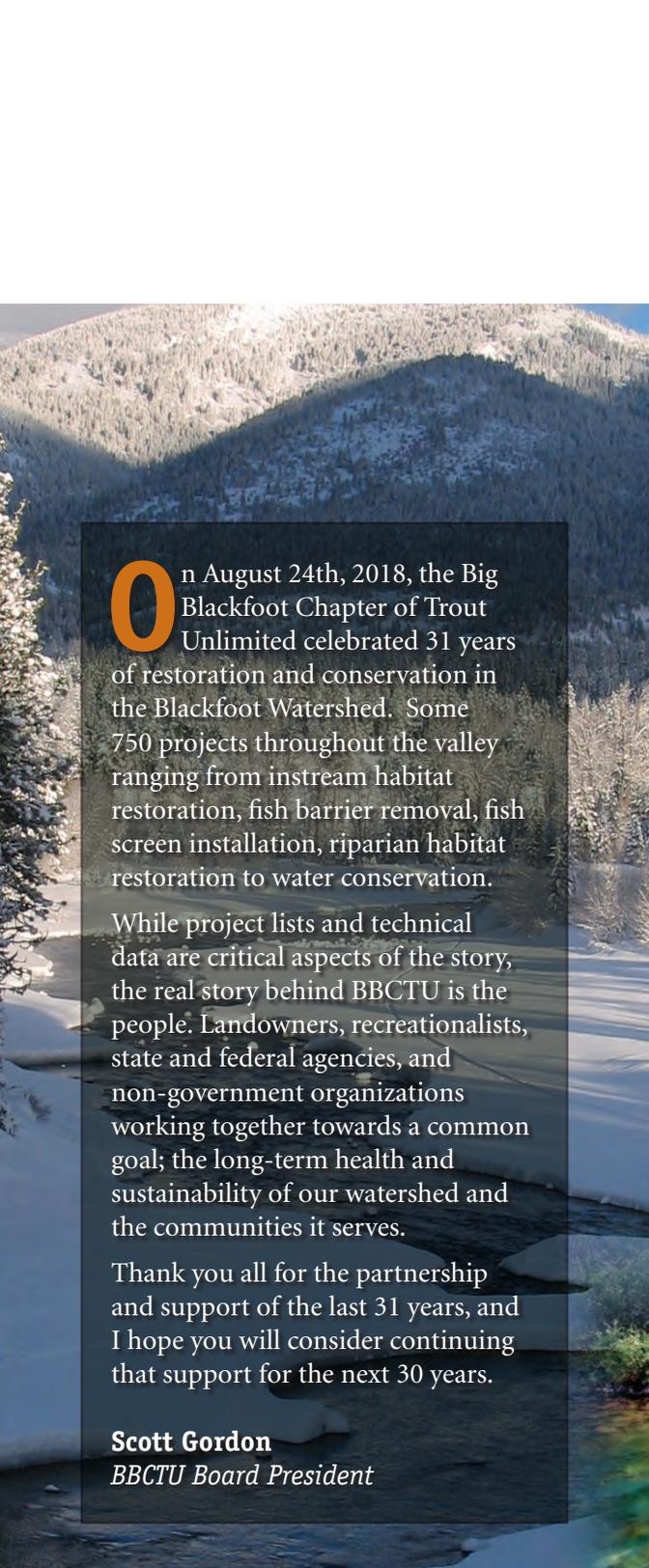
**T**he banks of Nevada Creek through our place were in a sad state of affairs. The banks were straight up and down and caved off each spring with tons of soil being lost downstream. Since the restoration work beginning in 2010, the creek is flowing like it should without eroding the banks. It's a job that is very well done and we are very pleased. They estimate this project will save over 100 dump truck loads of dirt every year from eroding away."

—**Wade & Dianna Stitt** Landowners



**Living  
Working  
Fishing  
Ranching  
Restoring  
...in the  
Blackfoot  
Watershed**

photo by Jim Streeter

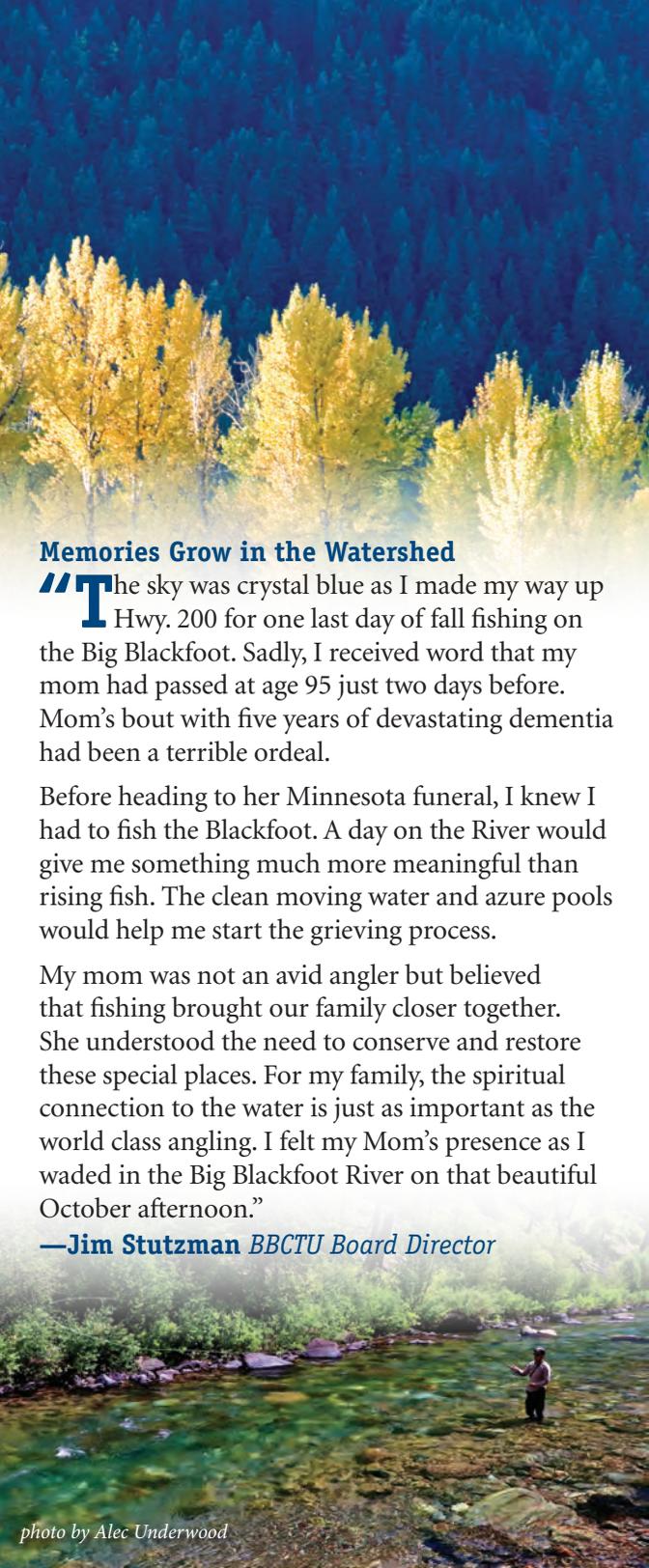


**O**n August 24th, 2018, the Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited celebrated 31 years of restoration and conservation in the Blackfoot Watershed. Some 750 projects throughout the valley ranging from instream habitat restoration, fish barrier removal, fish screen installation, riparian habitat restoration to water conservation.

While project lists and technical data are critical aspects of the story, the real story behind BBCTU is the people. Landowners, recreationalists, state and federal agencies, and non-government organizations working together towards a common goal; the long-term health and sustainability of our watershed and the communities it serves.

Thank you all for the partnership and support of the last 31 years, and I hope you will consider continuing that support for the next 30 years.

**Scott Gordon**  
BBCTU Board President



### Memories Grow in the Watershed

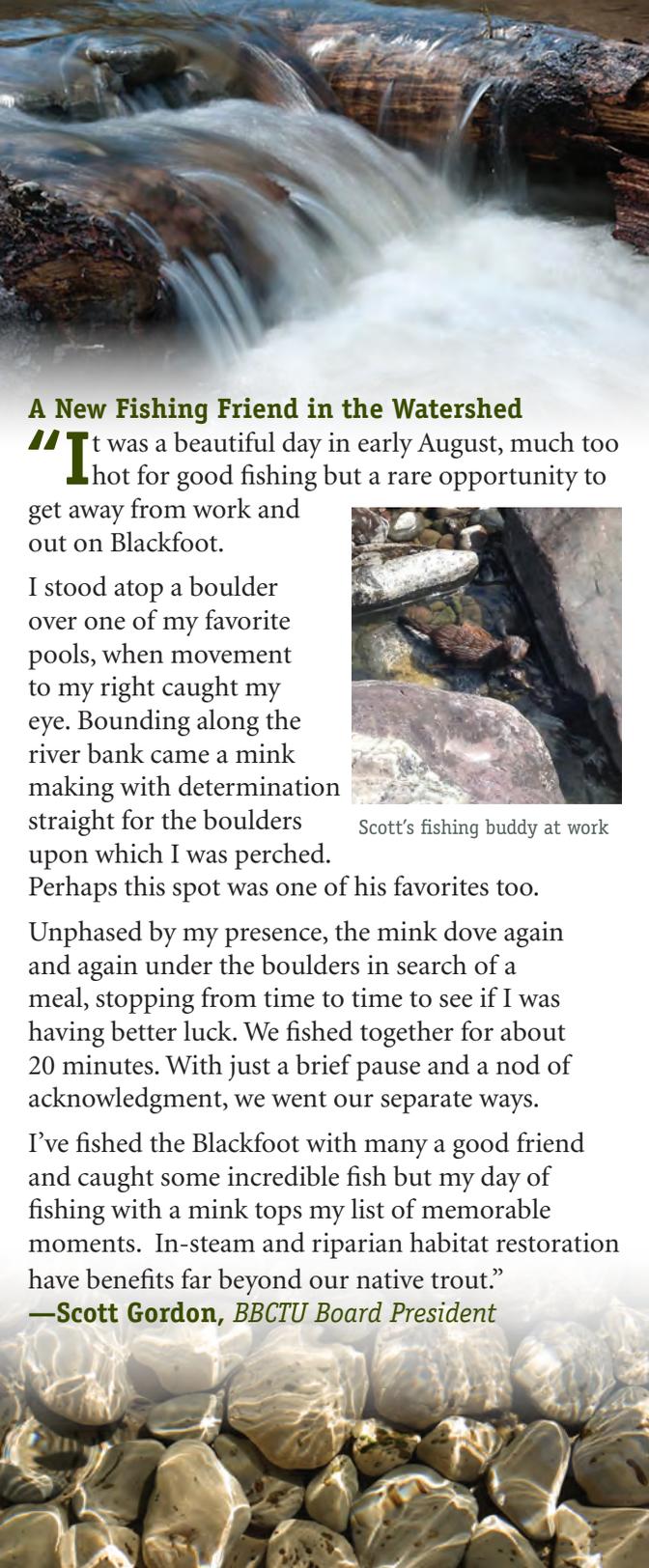
**T**he sky was crystal blue as I made my way up Hwy. 200 for one last day of fall fishing on the Big Blackfoot. Sadly, I received word that my mom had passed at age 95 just two days before. Mom's bout with five years of devastating dementia had been a terrible ordeal.

Before heading to her Minnesota funeral, I knew I had to fish the Blackfoot. A day on the River would give me something much more meaningful than rising fish. The clean moving water and azure pools would help me start the grieving process.

My mom was not an avid angler but believed that fishing brought our family closer together. She understood the need to conserve and restore these special places. For my family, the spiritual connection to the water is just as important as the world class angling. I felt my Mom's presence as I waded in the Big Blackfoot River on that beautiful October afternoon."

—**Jim Stutzman** BBCTU Board Director

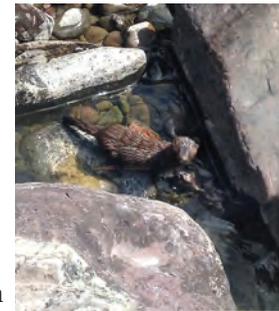
photo by Alec Underwood



### A New Fishing Friend in the Watershed

**I**t was a beautiful day in early August, much too hot for good fishing but a rare opportunity to get away from work and out on Blackfoot.

I stood atop a boulder over one of my favorite pools, when movement to my right caught my eye. Bounding along the river bank came a mink making with determination straight for the boulders upon which I was perched.



Scott's fishing buddy at work

Perhaps this spot was one of his favorites too.

Unphased by my presence, the mink dove again and again under the boulders in search of a meal, stopping from time to time to see if I was having better luck. We fished together for about 20 minutes. With just a brief pause and a nod of acknowledgment, we went our separate ways.

I've fished the Blackfoot with many a good friend and caught some incredible fish but my day of fishing with a mink tops my list of memorable moments. In-stream and riparian habitat restoration have benefits far beyond our native trout."

—**Scott Gordon**, BBCTU Board President



### Working & Playing in the Watershed

**R**unning a fly-fishing business, like the Blackfoot Angler in Ovando, is always a guessing game within Mother Nature's rules. Late summer 2017 brought a worst case fire season for the Blackfoot Valley. It literally closed down fishing in August.

Mother Nature brought eleven feet of snow over the winter with one of the biggest snows in decades. But as the resulting 2018 spring runoff hit the 100-year flood levels, we watched and waited to see if historic levels would wipe out our Blackfoot River bridges. The bridges stood, log jams went spinning out, and the course of the river was changed in several areas. Fishing never even got underway in 2018 until July.

But when it started up, it was "bitchen!" The Blackfoot River was consistently above normal water levels and temps were consistently below warm levels. For the first time in years there were no restrictions on fishing. Fishermen were happy. Fish were happy. And owners of fly-fishing businesses were ecstatic. You just have to know how to work with Mother Nature."

—**Travis Thurmond & Kathy Schoendoefler**  
Blackfoot Angler Fly Shop Owners

