

The Nature  
Conservancy



# MONTANA'S FRESHWATER STRATEGY

## Resilient by Nature



All Montanans know that water is a precious resource.



It drives agriculture, community health, real estate and nature. In Montana, and throughout the West, the demand for clean, fresh water is exceeding the supply; a situation that is growing more perilous every day. Changing snowmelt and rain patterns mean that already over-allocated water is becoming even scarcer. In places, human development has hemmed in and diverted rivers to the extent that nature's natural systems for cleaning, storing and conserving water are breaking down. The good news is that these systems can be restored.



In Montana's High Divide, The Nature Conservancy and our partners are improving conditions in the headwaters of the Missouri River. A broad coalition of active regional watershed groups, ranchers, farmers, anglers and conservationists are committed to ambitious efforts to deliver clean, cold and ample water for nature and people.

# MONTANA'S FRESHWATER STRATEGY

*Our Vision is for clean, cold and ample water in rivers, wetlands and streams to meet the needs of people and nature.*



## PROTECT



- Protect wetlands and floodplains that clean and conserve water and maintain dynamic, healthy rivers
- Partner with private landowners on conservation easements to prevent development in sensitive floodplains
- Prevent and remove restrictions on movement of rivers
- Keep more water in streams through voluntary landowner agreements



## RESTORE



- Increase natural water storage by restoring degraded wetlands and beaver habitat
- Replant native streamside vegetation such as willows and cottonwoods
- Upgrade culverts and bridges to remove obstacles to river processes and movement of fish and wildlife
- Improve irrigation and stockwater infrastructure to achieve water conservation goals



## ENGAGE



- Support local, community-based efforts watershed councils and conservation districts
- Collaborate with universities and agencies on applied research into climate resilience, restoration and planning
- Use science to test innovative approaches and measure outcomes
- Engage local landowners, educators and everyone who enjoys rivers to be part of solving water challenges

## How You Can Help

**Volunteer!** *Contribute your enthusiasm and time to projects in your watershed.*

**Share your ideas** *with your local watershed group, conservation district, State or Federal agency.*

**Donate** *to support our work.*

*Contact The Nature Conservancy in Montana to find out more ways to help our local waterways.*

[nature.org/headwaters](http://nature.org/headwaters)

# MISSOURI RIVER HEADWATERS

## EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD



**PROTECT:** *The Rock Point conservation easement is one of our original land protection projects in the Missouri Headwaters. It has prevented riprap and development along 3.6 miles of the Big Hole River since 1979. The ranch is adjacent to two other Conservancy easements. These landowners have chosen a conservation legacy that will protect functioning river corridors which provide valuable streamside habitat for birds and other wildlife, improve river function downstream, and support local fisheries.*



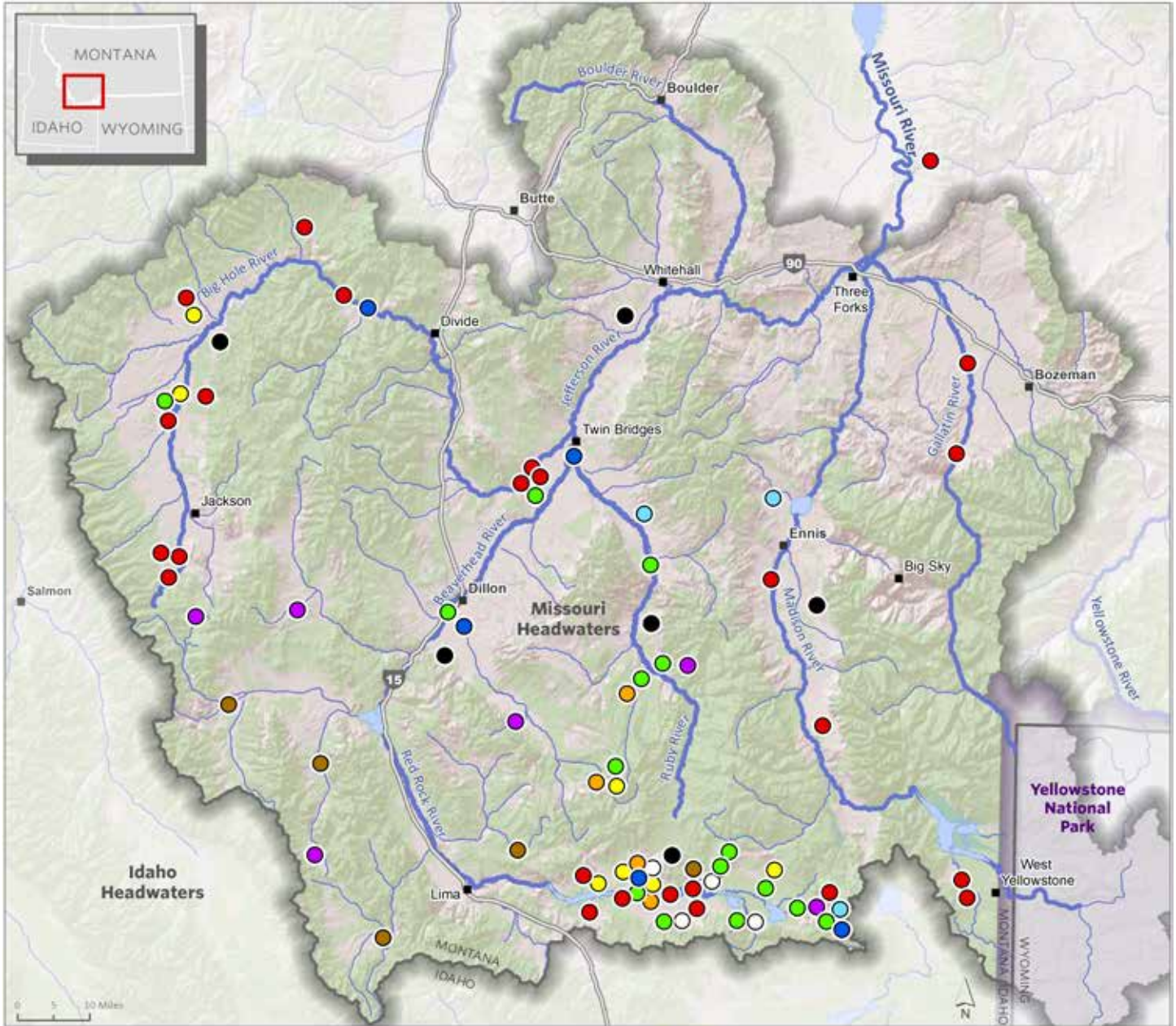
**RESTORE:** *Based on cutting edge science, the Conservancy is working with private landowners along priority rivers and streams and the Ruby Conservation District to reconnect waters to their floodplains and adjacent wetlands. The goal of floodplain reconnection is to restore willows and cottonwoods along stream banks, reduce sediment in the river, and restore natural water storage capacity for late-season flows.*



**ENGAGE:** *Since 1999, the Conservancy has worked closely with local partners in the Centennial Valley – a key partner being the Centennial Valley Association. This citizen group rallies landowners, agencies and community members to sustain agriculture and conservation by providing a local forum for leadership. The Conservancy partners with this community group to improve habitat for Arctic grayling and sage grouse, control noxious weeds, and modify fences to promote wildlife movement.*

## ON THE GROUND IN THE HIGH DIVIDE HEADWATERS

Our vision for ensuring clean, cold and ample water for people and nature touches down in many ways. Along with our public and private partners, our work ranges from securing conservation easements to protect floodplains and cutting edge research to define the places most likely to survive the impacts of a climate change, to building beaver mimicry structures that restore wetlands. For more maps and information visit [nature.org/headwaters](http://nature.org/headwaters).



<p><b>PROTECT</b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Conservation Easements</li> <li> Measuring and Managing Streamflows</li> </ul>	<p><b>RESTORE</b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Planting Willows &amp; Trees</li> <li> Native Fish Habitat Improvement</li> <li> Beaver Mimicry</li> <li> Channel Reconstruction</li> <li> Upgraded Stream Crossings</li> </ul>	<p><b>ENGAGE</b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Grazing Plans</li> <li> Community Weed Initiatives</li> <li> Watershed Group Partnerships</li> </ul>
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