



AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY
ENHANCEMENT & SUSTAINABILITY



STRATEGIC PLAN

2021-2025

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”
- Margaret Mead

WINNETT ACES

Introduction

The Winnett ACES is a grassroots-led 501(c)3 non-profit organization addressing rural vitality issues that affect agricultural communities in central Montana.

The ACES began as a group of Winnett area producers joining together to address the most important issues facing their community. These issues are not unique to central Montana: decreasing population, housing, childcare, business opportunities, access to health care, aging population, and struggle to engage with absentee landowners. Instead of resigning themselves to a bleak future where these problems persist, Winnett ACES chose to remedy these problems.

The group began exploring proactive, positive solutions to address strengthening the existing community through education, outreach, conservation, and civic projects. The core of ACES projects revolve around informing a wider audience about how beef is produced and how ranchers in central Montana steward their grasslands while also working to benefit the local community through workshops, access to business opportunities, and facilitating community building. These projects are wide-ranging and include:

- Beef in the Schools: Local producers donate beef to the school.
- Agriculture Education: Workshops and trainings for producers on business and land management decisions.
- Agriculture Education for the Public: Education and outreach for the broader public about how beef cattle are raised through tours, speaking, and hosting college classes.
- Wildlife Working Group: Addressing how to achieve a healthy elk population.
- Revitalization through Historic Buildings: Working to restore and recognize community heritage.
- Grassbank: Establish a ranch property that functions as a grassbank offering grazing opportunities for young producers and others.
- Conservation Incentives: ACES assists in funding conservation practices, such as reseeding cropland to grassland, improving water infrastructure and wildlife-friendly fencing for improved grazing management.

The core members of the Winnett ACES share a passion for their community and for making the community resilient to what the future might bring. Members are an even mix of male and female, most are agricultural producers. Members range in age and some belong to generational families, while others are new to the Winnett area.

Winnett ACES members are considered thought leaders and active members of the community. ACES members are engaged community members who volunteer thousands of hours collectively each year to various boards, committees, and civic positions.

WINNETT ACES

Mission

Strengthen our community by sustaining the health of our land, economy, and traditions for future generations.

Vision

Provide opportunities for local residents that benefit agriculture, conservation, and the community, while educating the larger public and helping future generations succeed in agriculture.

Core Values

- Partnerships/Collaboration
- Transparency/Communication/Accountability
- Knowledge Seeking/Sharing
- Compassion
- Commitment/Determination
- Good Neighbor Behavior
- Resiliency/Planning for the future

Goals

Agricultural Community Enhancement and Sustainability

- Land - Winnett ACES will establish a grassbank for the purpose of building community through strengthening agricultural businesses and offering grazing opportunities to younger ranchers while expanding conservation.
- Conservation – Through efforts of the Conservation Committee, ACES will support producers in the management of agricultural land, education for producers and partners on land management practices, implementation and continuation of wildlife friendly practices to manage sustainable wildlife populations and management of healthy ecosystems.
- Wildlife – Through collaboration of producers, landowners, sportsmen, wildlife management agencies, and other NGOs, we can provide education/information for producers, landowners, and partner and agency staff on wildlife friendly practices and policy direction, implementation and continuation of wildlife friendly practices to manage sustainable wildlife populations within an agricultural system.
- Education & Outreach - Winnett ACES will provide educational opportunities for rural community members to increase economic, social, and cultural resiliency and will provide outreach opportunities for the public to engage with rural communities and agricultural producers.
- Community Enhancement - Winnett ACES will work with community members and leaders as well as partners through supporting economic development and addressing community needs.

**Winnett ACES Operational Support
2021**

Funding Secured

Funding Sought

<i>Position</i>	<i>Employer</i>	<i>Tasks</i>	<i>Funding Sources</i>	<i>Yearly Expense</i>
ACES Coordinator	PCCD	Conservation Committee, Wildlife Committee, Staff to Board, general operations	NFWF, WWF	\$ 30,000.00
BeefMT Project Manager	PCCD	Develop BeefMT Program	USDA	\$ 27,000.00
Bookkeeper	Contract	Financial accounting	administrative fees, donations, membership	\$ 6,000.00
Administrative Assistant	PCCD	Grant writing, building relationships	NFWF	\$ 7,500.00
ACES Education and Outreach Director	PCCD	Education for producers, outreach for public	NRCS, WWF, PSI	\$ 55,000.00
Communications	Contract	Website, Facebook, blogs	Memberships, donations	\$ 3,000.00
ACES Community Projects Leader	Contract	Courthouse, Community Enhancement	Grants, Fundraising	\$ 30,000.00
ACES Grassbank Projects Leader	Contract	Land/Grassbank, Courthouse, Community Enhancement	State, Federal Grants	\$ 30,000.00
Total				\$ 188,500.00
* Partners Position	Phsnts Forvr	Habitat projects, grant writing, outreach	Many!	

2022 - 2025

<i>Position</i>	<i>Employer</i>	<i>Tasks</i>	<i>Funding Sources</i>	<i>Yearly Expense</i>
ACES Conservation Projects Coordinator	PCCD	Conservation Committee, Wildlife Committee	NFWF, WWF, NRCS in '24-25	\$ 30,000.00
ACES Education and Outreach Director	PCCD	Education for producers, outreach for public	NRCS, WWF, PSI	\$ 55,000.00
Grassbank Manager	Contract	Manage ranch and grassbank members	NRCS, grazing fees	\$ 50,000.00
Bookkeeper	Contract	Financial accounting	administrative fees	\$ 6,000.00
Administrative Assistant	PCCD	Grant writing, building relationships	NFWF	\$ 7,500.00
Communications	Contract	Website, Facebook, blogs	Memberships, donations	\$ 3,000.00
ACES Community Projects Leader	Contract	Courthouse, Community Enhancement	Grants, Fundraising	\$ 30,000.00
ACES Grassbank Projects Leader	Contract	Land/Grassbank, Courthouse, Community Enhancement	State, Federal Grants	\$ 30,000.00
Executive Director - RSA/ACES	RSA	Staff to Board, general operations, development	Fundraising, NFWF, Murdock	\$ 30,000.00
Total				\$ 241,500.00
* Partners Position	Phsnts Forvr	Habitat projects, grant writing, outreach	Many!	

*ACES Strategic Plan
2020-2022
Grassbank Project*

PROGRAM: Grassbank Project

CONTACT PERSON: Charlie Ahlgren, Committee Chair

Mission Statement: Winnett ACES will establish a grassbank for the purpose of building community through strengthening agricultural businesses and offering grazing opportunities to younger ranchers while expanding conservation.

Timeline:

- Bi-Monthly – on the 15th of every other month Action Plan will be emailed to contact person for updates – updates should be made in RED.
- Bi-Monthly – by the 30th of every other month updates should be returned so changes can be made to the master plan
- Action plans will be part of the annual evaluation process (ex. Progress to Date should include a date with pertinent information).

Strategic Direction: Agriculture

Objectives/Goals:

Community: Through ownership and operation of a grassbank ACES will achieve; local management of property, helping to maintain the agricultural identity of the community, increase the economic security of participating ranches and therefore the local businesses who are supported by agriculture (feed, fuel, equipment supply, professional services in accounting and law, grocery and restaurants, etc.), provide job opportunities (ACES Coordinator, ACES Grassbank Manager, etc.), and promote involvement in the community by ACES members.

Agriculture: Through ownership and operation of a grassbank, ACES will achieve; access to grazing lands for producers, assistance with successful ranch transitions, mentoring for young ranchers, education for ranchers, and education for the general public about working lands.

Conservation: Through ownership and operation of a grassbank, ACES will achieve; maintenance of native rangeland, education for ranchers on conservation practices, implementation and continuation of wildlife friendly practices to manage sustainable wildlife populations, management of healthy riparian areas.

ACES Strategic Plan
2020-2022
Grassbank Project

Team Action Plan - Goals & Measurements	Person(s) Responsible	Target Date for Completion	Additional Resources Required:	Estimated Cost	Progress to date	Complete	Indicator of Progress 1, 2 or 3
Secure grass bank property	All Committee Members	Spring 2023	Funding for acquisition, funding for endowment	\$5,000,000 \$1,000,000	Property Identified		1
Identify potential properties	All Committee	Spring 2021	None	Volunteer	Informal discussion		2
Identify potential Grassbank Members	All Committee	Spring 2021	None	Volunteer			1
Develop a model grassbank lease, including criteria for grassbank members.	Subcommittee working with RSA via monthly calls	Fall 2021	Consultant	\$5,000 Per Year	Meetings started and grant request submitted		1.5
Develop model financial strategy	All Committee Consultant	Summer 2022	Consultant	\$12,500 Per Year	Grant request for consultant funds submitted		1.5
Develop a grassbank management strategy, including best grassbank structure (co-op, grazing association, etc.)	Potential Grassbank Members, All Committee, Consultant	Summer 2022	Consultant Grassbank Members	\$12,500 Per Year	Grant request for consultant funds submitted		1.5
Identify grazing infrastructure needs for potential properties	All Committee	Winter 2021	None	Volunteer	Teigen needs identified		1.5

Description - 3 Year Projection	Funding Need
Development Consultant/Financial Strategy	\$ 90,000.00
Land Purchase	\$ 5,000,000.00
Endowment	\$ 1,000,000.00
Land Improvements	\$ 1,500,000.00
Total Grassbank Project Costs	\$ 7,590,000.00

*ACES Strategic Plan
2020-2022
Community Enhancement*

PROGRAM: Community Enhancement

CONTACT PERSON: Laura Nowlin

Mission Statement: Winnett ACES will work with community members and leaders as well as partners through supporting economic development and addressing community needs.

Timeline:

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Strategic Direction: Community Enhancement through Historic Preservation

Objectives/Goals:

Community: Through rehabilitation of historic resources, ACES will provide opportunities for housing, daycare, office space, and other identified needs within the community. These efforts will lead to economic development and increased pride in our community for our heritage and rural identity.

Agriculture: Through community improvement projects, ACES will work to enhance agricultural opportunities within the city limits with projects such as, community vegetable gardens using no-till methods, roof top gardens, cooperating with the Conservation District to plant trees in town, etc.

Conservation: ACES will work to incorporate energy and water efficiency devices and practices in all projects, including such things as roof top rain water collection and distribution, preserving historic buildings and using those existing buildings to conserve building materials.

*ACES Strategic Plan
2020-2022
Community Enhancement*

Team Action Plan - Goals & Measurements	Person(s) Responsible	Target Date for Completion	Additional Resources Required:	Estimated Cost	Progress to date	Complete	Indicator of Progress 1, 2 or 3
Elect a Committee Chair	All Committee	July 2020	None	None	Done	XXXXXXX	3
Recruit at least five additional members (one per existing member) to participate in the Revitalization Committee	Laura N., Laura K., Chris, Diana, Lindsay	August 2020	None	None	Done	XXXXXXX	3
Hire a Project Leader	All Committee	January 2021	Interested Applicants	\$30,000	Done	XXXXXXXX	3
Community Planning: Determine needs (housing, office, etc.)	All Committee Project Leader	March 2021	Funding for Project Leader	\$1,500	Grant request in progress		1.5
Determine buildings/resources that can meet identified needs	All Committee Project Leader	March 2021	Funding for Project Leader	\$15,000	Grant request in progress		1.5
Identify partners and funding resources	All Committee Project Leader	October 2021	Funding for Project Leader	\$3,000	Grant request in progress		1.5
Develop specific workplan for each building/neighborhood	All Committee Project Leader	October 2021	None	Volunteer	None		0
Develop funding strategy for Courthouse	All Committee Project Leader	September 2021	Funding for Project Leader	\$3,500	Grant request in progress		1.5

Description - 3 Year Projection	Funding Need
Projects Leader	\$ 90,000.00
Courthouse	\$ 1,200,000.00
Downtown (Oddfellows/Townhall)	\$ 750,000.00
Total	\$ 2,040,000.00

*ACES Strategic Plan
2020-2023
Education and Outreach*

PROGRAM: Education and Outreach

CONTACT PERSON: Laura Nowlin

Mission Statement: Winnett ACES will provide educational opportunities for rural community members to increase economic, social, and cultural resiliency and will provide outreach opportunities for the public to engage with rural communities and agricultural producers.

Timeline:

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Strategic Direction: Agriculture and Education

Objectives/Goals:

Community: Through educational offerings, ACES will provide opportunities for community members to increase their skills in business and community leadership, thereby strengthening the entire community through economic security and a solid base for local businesses. Educational offerings will utilize local businesses (store, restaurants, hotel/housing) when possible. ACES will assist the public in understanding rural communities and the strengths and weaknesses of these communities, resulting in greater support for working to address rural concerns. Outreach events will utilize local businesses (store, restaurants, hotel/housing, etc.) when possible.

Agriculture: Through workshops and materials, ACES will offer opportunities to agricultural operators to increase their knowledge in the many facets of running an agricultural business (financial, herd health, natural resources management, etc.). Through outreach to the public, universities, agencies, and partner organizations, ACES will increase the understanding of the agricultural industry.

Conservation: Through education and outreach, ACES will work with landowners on conservation efforts as well as work to show the public that area ranchers are generational land stewards who are already conserving the land.

*ACES Strategic Plan
2020-2023
Education and Outreach*

Team Action Plan - Goals & Measurements	Person(s) Responsible	Target Date for Completion	Additional Resources Required:	Estimated Cost	Progress to date	Complete	Indicator of Progress 1, 2 or 3
Recruit at least five members to participate in the Education and Outreach Committee	All Committee	Summer 2021	None	Volunteer	None		0
Elect a Committee Chair	All Committee	Summer 2021	None	Volunteer	None		0
Hire an Education and Outreach Director	All Committee	Fall 2021	Staff	\$55,000	Grant application in progress		1
Determine educational topics to prioritize (ag finance, natural resources, leadership, etc.)	All Committee Director	Feb 2022	Staff		Will wait for Director		1
Determine methods of outreach to prioritize (tours, articles, etc)	All Committee Director	Feb 2022	Staff		Will wait for Director		1
Determine yearly goals for E&O offerings (1 – 3 workshops/year, etc.)	All Committee Director	Feb 2022	Staff		Will wait for Director		1
Create 2-year workplan based on goals and priorities	All Committee Director	Feb 2022	Staff		Will wait for Director		1

Description - 3 Year Projection	Funding Need
E&O Director	\$ 165,000.00
Workshops	\$ 30,000.00
Total	\$ 195,000.00

PROGRAM: Conservation Committee

CONTACT PERSON: Brent Smith; ACES Coordinator

Mission Statement: Through efforts of the Conservation Committee, ACES will support producers in the management of agricultural land, education for producers and partners on land management practices, implementation and continuation of wildlife friendly practices to manage sustainable wildlife populations and management of healthy ecosystems.

Timeline:

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Strategic Direction: Resource Conservation for Agriculture and Wildlife

Objectives/Goals:

Community: Through the establishment and focus of a conservation committee, grants can be distributed to producers within the Musselshell Plains area through a cost share program. This will help producers to fund and accomplish projects that will improve their operation while promoting conservation and wildlife friendly practices. These efforts can also support area businesses and contractors.

Agriculture: Through improved management practices from conservation efforts and funds, producers can improve their operational profitability. With the profitability comes more self-sustaining agriculture, which can have a positive impact on land-use decisions and local economics.

Conservation: Through efforts of the Conservation Committee, ACES will support producers in the management of native rangeland, education for producers on conservation practices, implementation and continuation of wildlife friendly practices to manage sustainable wildlife populations and management of healthy ecosystems.

Strategic Direction: **ACES Conservation Committee (CC)**

Objectives/Goals:

Indicator of Progress

1 = Below Target

2 = On Target

3 = Exceeding Target

Team Action Plan - Goals & Measurements	Person(s) Responsible	Target Date for Completion	Additional Resources Required:	Estimated Cost	Progress to date	Complete	Progress 1, 2 or 3
Establish conservation committee (CC) for guidance and review of conservation program	All	June 2019				6/19/2019	2
Elect CC chair	ACES Coord.	8/2019			CC Chair was elected on 8-28-19	8/28/2019	2
Develop application/procedures for project solicitation	All Comm.	8/2019			This is an ongoing process with changes to grant funders, etc.	12/10/2019	2
Develop supporting documents and procedures for CC to function and work with its partners	All Comm.	Summer 2019					2
Vetting of applications for CC grant funds for conservation projects	All Comm.	On going			Phase 1 and 2 applications have been reviewed and funding has been designated.		2
Secure additional funding for projects that are above and beyond current funding available.	ACES Coord.	January 2020			NGPJV Grant was awarded for Phase 1 of conservation projects. Grant must be completed by Dec 31, 2020.		2
Ensure required monitoring is established and completed per ACES & partners requirements.	ACES Coord.				Two new transect has been established on ACES project properties. All other projects have previously established transects on properties.		2
Complete reports required by State, Federal, and Partners.					Phase 1 cultural and env. Reports have been completed by Partners. Phase 2 projects cultural reviews have been completed by contractor and has been reviewed by FWS		2

Indicator of Progress

1 = Below Target

2 = On Target

3 = Exceeding Target

					Archeologist and approved by MT SHPO.		
Apply for additional grant resources as needed to meet conservation demands from local producers, within the capacity of the Winnett ACES partnership to deliver.		On Going					
Establish and Funding for Habitat Implementation Coordinator with current and future Partners for increased capacity for monitoring, Project oversight, & fund raising.	All Committee	On going	Partners & ACES Land Coordinator		ACES plus 7 other partners have secured and/or pledged funding for the first 3 years of a PF position located in Winnett, MT. Estimated hire date of Spring 2021.		2
Apply for and pursue additional funding for ACES capacity and staff.	ACES Staff	August 2020	ACES Land coordinator time.		NFWF ConocoPhillips Spirit of conservation grant proposal submitted on 8/8/2020. Award selection date in Nov 2020. Funding for ACES staff, PF Partner's position, and on the ground projects (Conifer removal and invasive species)	11/10/2020	2
NFWF NGP Grant Pre-proposal applications Due.		November 2020	ACES Land coordinator time.		NFWF NGP grant application was submitted and is awaiting review.		
Ensure all conservation projects be completed in a timely matter to allow for final reporting to funding partners. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NFWF grant will need all projects completed and 	ACES Coord.	On going					

Indicator of Progress

1 = Below Target

2 = On Target

3 = Exceeding Target

inspected by March 1 st , 2022. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final Report Due to NFWF by May 14th, 2022. NGPJV funded projects completed by Dec 4th, 2020. NGPJV grant final report due Dec 31st, 2020. 							
Share CC successes and challenges with ACES membership, partners, and public	All Comm.	On Going					

Current Conservation Committee Budget

Funding Source	Staff Funding	Implementation/Project Funds
NFWF NGP (2019)	~\$18,000 (60% of Funding for Coordinator)	\$121,004.66
NGPJV (2020)	\$0.00	\$27,713.45

Indicator of Progress
 1 = Below Target
 2 = On Target
 3 = Exceeding Target

PROGRAM: Wildlife Committee

CONTACT PERSON: Brent Smith, ACES Coordinator

Mission Statement: Through collaboration of producers, landowners, sportsmen, wildlife management agencies, and other NGOs, we can provide education/information for producers, landowners, and partner and agency staff on wildlife friendly practices and policy direction, implementation and continuation of wildlife friendly practices to manage sustainable wildlife populations within an agricultural system.

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Strategic Direction: Agriculture

Objectives/Goals:

Community: To establish a wildlife committee for local producers/landowners and partners to help facilitate collaboration for improved wildlife management and habitat. This will help facilitate a healthy relationship with regards to wildlife management and habitat conservation for the benefit of producers, wildlife, and the general public.

Agriculture: Through collaboration of producers, land owners, wildlife management agencies and others NGO, we can provide education/information for producers and land owners on wildlife friendly practices and policy direction, implementation and continuation of wildlife friendly practices to manage sustainable wildlife populations within an agricultural system.

Conservation: Through collaboration of producers, land owners, wildlife management agencies and others NGO, we can provide education/information for producers, land owners, and the general public on wildlife friendly practices, implementation and continuation of wildlife friendly practices to manage sustainable wildlife populations.

Strategic Direction: ACES Wildlife Committee

Objectives/Goals:

Team Action Plan - Goals & Measurements	Person(s) Responsible	Target Date for Completion	Additional Resources Required:	Estimated Cost	Progress to date	Complete	Progress 1, 2 or 3
Establish wildlife committee to help improve collaboration for wildlife and landowner interactions.	All Committee	7/1/2019					
Elect Wildlife Committee chair	All Committee	10/1/2020					
Work with Partners to improve wildlife management and habitat within the Musselshell Plains.		On Going					
Continue to be engage with partners and producers with regards to the management of elk in HD 410.		On Going					
Determine species of concern/interest (i.e. Feral Hogs)							
Work with partners to establish additional areas of focus pertaining to specific wildlife species		On Going					
Gather Information for management of species of Concern/Interest							
Share wildlife committee successes and challenges with ACES membership, partners, and public.							

Current Wildlife Committee Budget

Funding Source	Staff Funding	Implementation/Project Funds
NFWF NGP (2019)	~\$3,000 (10% of Funding for Coordinator)	N/A