



# THE LAND REVIEW

INSIGHTS ON IDAHO CONSERVATION

Celebrating 26 Years  
of Stewardship!

Summer 2019

*"Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them. Now we face the question whether a still higher 'standard of living' is worth its cost in things natural, wild and free." ~ Aldo Leopold*

## A Message from the desk of the Director

Spring has been a busy for the PLT!

Here's a quick look at some of what we have been up to.



### Regionally

We became members of **The Heart of the Rockies Initiative** in May. The Heart of the Rockies Initiative is a partnership of 22 independent local, regional and national land trusts and conservancies. We are excited to be a part of the larger conservation community who share our same vision. While the local challenges we face may be different from other partners, we understand the PLT is not an "independent part" but rather an "interdependent part" of the Central Rocky Mountains of North America. Having the opportunity to work with the Heart of the Rockies Initiative will make us a stronger more vibrant voice for private land conservation in West Central Idaho.

### Statewide

The PLT was asked to participate on the **Advisory Board for Idaho Climate-Economy Impacts Assessment**. The assessment will connect the latest scientific research on Idaho's changing climate with economic risks and opportunities to help Idahoans better understand these economic risks and opportunities linked to Idaho's changing climate. In particular, the assessment will show how the changing climate will impact businesses, residents, and local and state economies. This will allow Idaho to start planning now for a productive, resilient future. The advisory board includes business, community, and policy leaders that will help shape the assessment. This board promises to provide diverse Idaho perspectives to help make the assessment as relevant, engaging, and tangible as possible.

### Locally

The Land Trust began work on the **Payette River Basin Initiative**. The Initiative is an effort to target this valuable resource, which in some ways has been forgotten, and is a long-term road map for the conservation of the Basin. Under this watershed Initiative there will be project areas to help the PLT focus our energies on landscapes of concern. Currently the three project areas of the Initiative are: the Payette River Access project, the Payette Lake Conservation project and the Agricultural Heritage project. On June 27<sup>th</sup>, the PLT board had the fantastic opportunity to unveil the Initiative in an hour-long meeting with Governor Little while standing on the shores of Payette Lake. You can read more about the Payette River Basin Initiative and the meeting with the Governor in this edition of the newsletter or by visiting our web site.

The Payette Land Trust cannot exist without your generous support! If you have supported the PLT this year, Thank you! If not, please consider a financial contribution to help further the cause of private land conservation in the West Central Mountains of Idaho.

*Craig Utter*

## Payette Land Trust Board Meets with Governor Little to Discuss Conservation in the Payette River Basin



*Governor Brad Little and Brian Wonderlich, General Counsel, with Rick Fereday, Payette Land Trust Board President, and Craig Utter, Executive Director of the PLT.*

On Thursday, June 27<sup>th</sup>, Governor Brad Little, along with members of his staff, met with the Payette Land Trust (PLT) Board along the shore of Payette Lake to discuss conservation within the Payette River Basin. The group gave the Governor a virtual tour of current PLT projects located in their service area which includes Adams, Idaho, Valley and Washington counties.

The conversation then turned to the PLT's efforts within the Payette River Basin.

With Payette Lake as a backdrop, the group introduced their Payette River Basin Initiative to Governor Little. The purpose of the Payette River Basin (PRB) Initiative is to utilize conservation easements to permanently conserve portions of the Basin which hold natural, recreational, agricultural and hydrological resource value. More specifically, the goal of the PRB initiative is to conserve a connected corridor from the Payette Lake inlet to Cabarton Bridge along the main stem of the North Fork Payette River. This effort will allow for access, recreation and movement of both people and wildlife within the corridor, while conserving the existing natural beauty and water quality.

"We appreciate the Governor taking time to meet and discuss our vision for the Payette River Basin," said Rick Fereday, President of the Payette Land Trust. "We had a great conversation about what the future could hold for this unique region."

Goals of the initiative also overlap substantially with those of the 2018 Valley County Comprehensive Plan. Chapters 4, 6 and 10 of the Plan describe Valley County priorities related to Natural Resources, Special Areas and Sites, as well as Recreation and Open Space.

"The Payette Land Trust has long understood the importance of the Basin to the area's quality of life, economic viability and unique natural beauty along with its impact to the state's overall water quality," said Craig Utter, PLT Executive Director. "The PLT will strive to keep the land in private ownership and provide the opportunity for public access through agreements with willing private landowners."

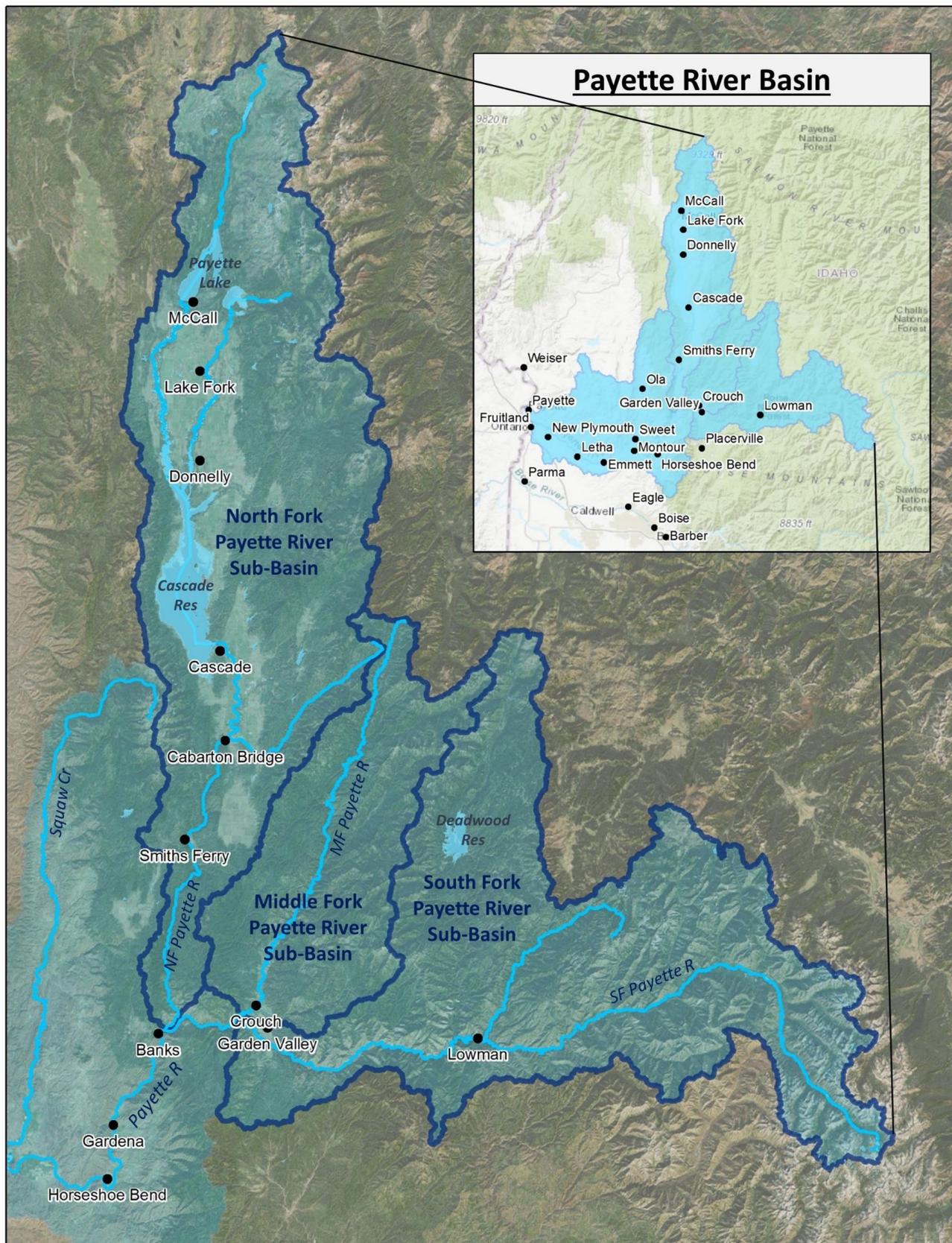


## Payette River Basin Overview: As Described in the 1999 Idaho State Water Comprehensive Plan

The Payette River is a major tributary to the Snake River, draining a 3,320 square mile watershed in west-central Idaho. Approximately 4,000 stream miles delineate the basin. Three major branches, the North, Middle, and South forks, conveying water from the mountainous headwaters, converge at the southwestern edge of the Idaho batholith to form the Payette River. The estimated amount of water entering the basin each year as precipitation is about 5.3 million-acre feet. The amount leaving the basin as the annual flow volume of the Payette River at Payette is 2.2 million acre-feet.

Major industries are agriculture (farming and ranching), timber, and recreation. Irrigated agriculture mainly occurs in two areas of the basin: the lower Payette Valley below Emmett, and Long Valley between McCall and Cabarton. Smaller valleys have some irrigated agriculture, as well. Approximately 33 percent of the basin is considered tentatively suitable for timber harvest.

The basin is characterized by 60,000 surface acres of boatable rivers, lakes, and reservoirs, comprising 9.1 percent of the state total. Five of the sixteen lakes in the state managed for a trophy or quality trout angling experience occur in the Payette River Basin. Winter sports are an important sector of the economy for upper basin communities.





## Payette River Basin Initiatives Compatibility with the 2018 Valley County Comprehensive Plan (VCCP)

The PRB Initiative goals overlap substantially with those of the 2018 Valley County Comprehensive Plan (VCCP). Chapters 4, 6 and 10 of the VCCP describe Valley County priorities related to Natural Resources, Special Areas and Sites, as well as Recreation and Open Space. The plan also recognized that findings have shown the overall water quality in Valley County, Lake Cascade and Payette Lake have been declining. The PLT believes the initiative can be a component in addressing this issue.

### Goals of the VCCP which align with the PRB Initiative are as follows:

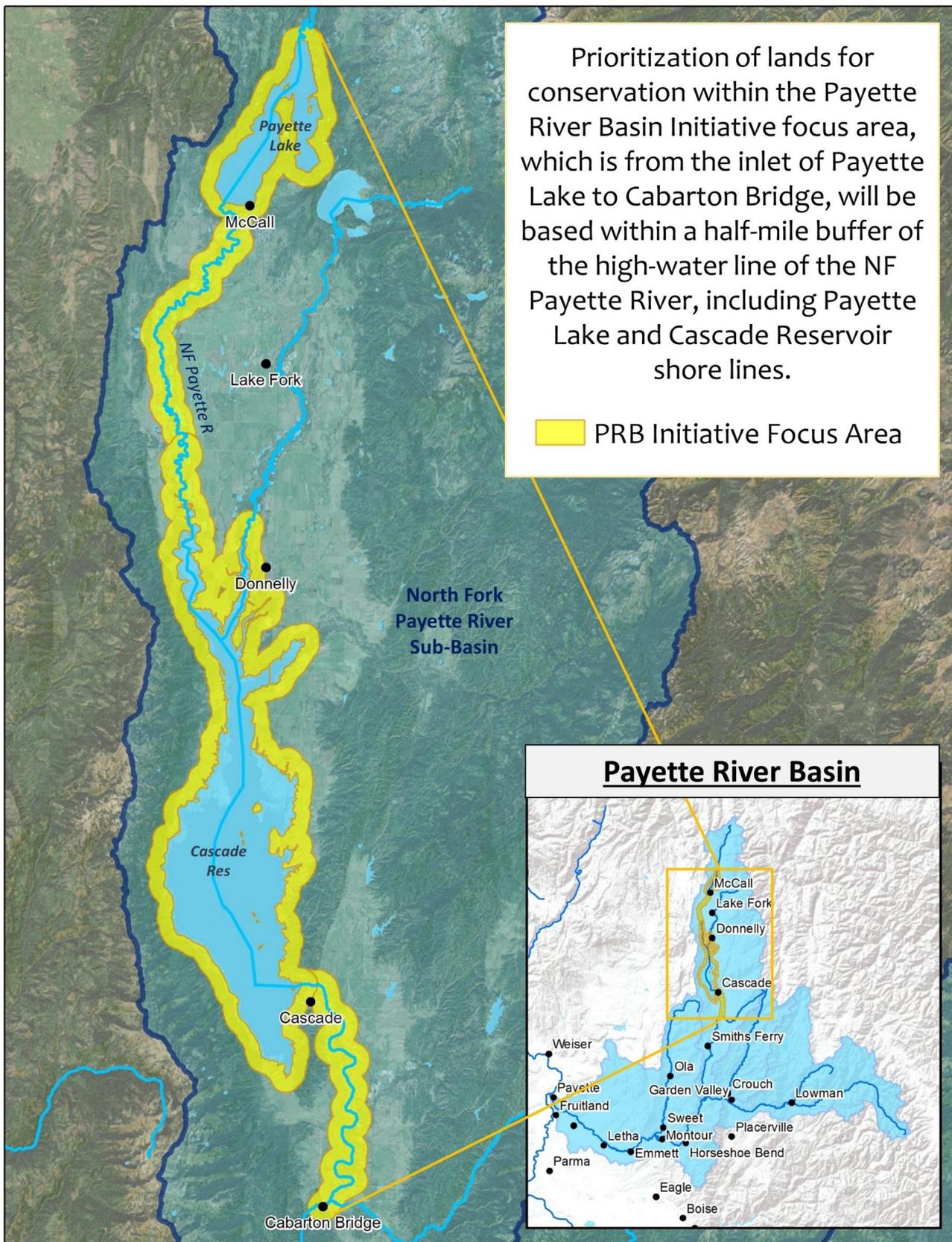
- Conserve and manage groundwater and surface water in all its forms in order to prevent depletion or pollution
- Protect fish and wildlife as natural resources of critical importance to Valley County
- To recognize the water bodies and waterways in Valley County as special areas
- To recognize important wildlife habitats
- To promote and support a viable recreation and tourism program that is in harmony with the Land Use section of this plan
- To promote and support acquisition and protection of open space that is in harmony with the Land Use section of this plan
- To promote and support acquisition and protection of our trail systems and recreation sites

### Objectives of the VCCP which align with the PRB Initiative are as follows:

- Encourage open space buffers adjacent to rivers and creeks in order to preserve riparian areas
- Promote agricultural practices which protect and improve water quality and the expansion of those practices
- Protect the recreation value of the County's water bodies and water courses
- Preservation, protection, and enhancement of wildlife and fish and their migration corridors
- Encourage formation of a citizens group to develop a specific plan for the North Fork of the Payette River between Payette Lake and Lake Cascade
- Work with local, state and federal agencies to provide improvements to waterways within the county
- Encourage new developments to provide and maintain on-site developed recreational facilities, parks, greenbelts, pathways, or open space
- To promote clustering of structures in new developments so as to preserve open space while allowing density
- To consider purchase of easements and property that is key to our recreation access points
- To communicate with land trusts

Download the Valley County Comprehensive Plan here:

<http://www.co.valley.id.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2018-Compilation-online-2.pdf>



Prioritization of lands for conservation within the Payette River Basin Initiative focus area, which is from the inlet of Payette Lake to Cabarton Bridge, will be based within a half-mile buffer of the high-water line of the NF Payette River, including Payette Lake and Cascade Reservoir shore lines.

PRB Initiative Focus Area



## Current Easements within the PRB

In 2006 the PLT and the Nahas family completed its first conservation easement along the North Fork of the Payette River. This conservation easement consists of 288 acres of river front, wetlands, upland grassland and timber. The property remains in private ownership as a working ranch. The PLT then followed in 2007 with an easement on the Blackhawk Development consisting of 364 acres of river front, wetlands and timber.

## Current Projects within the PRB

### Payette River Access Project

PLT is targeting efforts to connect existing conserved land between Payette Lake and Cascade Reservoir with a focus on providing limited public access to both the water and land. The benefits include partnership opportunities for the Valley County Pathways and the Payette River Basin Water Trails projects while meeting goals described within the 2018 Valley County Comprehensive Plan. Currently, the PLT is working with stakeholders and landowners along the corridor to permanently conserve undeveloped portions of the Payette River.

<http://www.valleycountypathways.org/>

<http://payetteriverwatertrails.com/>

### Payette Lake Conservation Project

The PLT is creating a Strategic Plan for permanently conserving the remaining undeveloped portion of Payette Lake located under the McCall Impact Area. The PLT understands the majority of undeveloped land around the lake is under the ownership of the State of Idaho Endowment Trust and would involve cooperation from the State Board of Land Commissioners. The benefits include:

- Permanent public access to the shoreline and surrounding land
- Water quality protection for the City of McCall and downstream consumers
- Protection of wildlife corridors and hiking and recreation sites, including planned bike trail development
- Elimination of land-use conflicts within the McCall Impact Area
- Promoting long-term economic viability through outdoor recreation

The PLT is currently working with landowners along Eastside Drive to gain insight and support for the plan.

<https://headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/trends-performance/recreation-counties-attract/#explore>

### Conserving Agriculture Heritage within the Basin

The PLT recognizes a significant amount of the working agricultural lands in the Basin reside within a few miles of the Payette River and its tributaries. The PLT is working with **Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS)** through a Farm Bill program to focus efforts on conserving this agricultural heritage.

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/id/programs/easements/>

*If you would like to learn more about the variety of options for supporting private lands conservation in the West Central Mountains of Idaho, please contact the Payette Land Trust or visit our website to become a member.*

*-Craig Utter, Executive Director*

