

# MCV MATTERS

CONNECT. PROTECT. ELECT. TURNING MONTANA VALUES INTO PRIORITIES.

March 2024

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## Thank you for showing up! Celebrating & gearing up for the year ahead with Montana Conservation Voters



Dear Montana Conservation Voters,

**MCV held its Annual Member Celebration on March 1, drawing over 200 attendees** to the Windsor Ballroom in Helena. U.S. Sen. Jon Tester, Montana Poet Laureate Chris La Tray, state legislators, local elected officials, and conservation partners from across Montana were among the guests. The event, an annual MCV tradition in Montana's capital, featured numerous sponsors at all levels and we are so grateful!

During his speech, Sen. Tester underscored the importance of MCV's mission to protect Montana's natural resources.

**"At a time when outside special interest groups and multimillionaires are ramping up their efforts to parcel off and sell Montana, I'm proud to stand alongside MCV to defend the Last Best Place,"** he declared. Tester emphasized the economic and intrinsic value of Montana's public lands and outdoor legacy.

Tester's sentiments were echoed by La Tray, who emphasized the ongoing battle to preserve Montana's natural heritage. **"It's the battle we fought, and it's the battle that more and more of you are finding yourselves in the position to fight for. That's why I said yes to come out here, because I want to be around people who are willing to fight for me ..."** La Tray expressed.

**I want to emphasize the significance of 2024 as a pivotal moment for Montana.** In this critical election year, we all must work together. By uniting, we can elect pro-conservation candidates up and down the ballot to steadfastly defend our treasured outdoor way of life.

Yours in conservation,

**Whitney Tawney**  
Executive Director  
Montana Conservation Voters



Team MCV



## MCV Candidate Endorsements

Candidate filing closed on Monday, March 11 and **Montana Conservation Voters plans to endorse candidates running for office at the local, state, and federal level.** On March 18, we will release our candidate endorsement memo which will outline our process and how candidates apply for our endorsement.

**Check [mtvoters.org](http://mtvoters.org) after March 18** to view our complete endorsement memo and how you can support our endorsed candidates this election cycle.



## “Get Your Montana Back” with Ryan Busse

**And so it begins! Wednesday, March 6, marked Team MCV’s first endorsed candidate event of 2024.**

We were proud to partner with co-hosts 100% lifetime champion Rep. Marilyn Marler, Veneri’s Alex Stokman, and MCV-endorsed Missoula City Council President Amber Sherrill to create a space for women to get to know Team MCV’s endorsed gubernatorial candidate.

And Missoula turned out! With over 50 attendees, we heard about Ryan’s commitment to protecting Montana’s clean air, clean water, public lands, and democracy. Ryan’s campaign is starting a movement and we are happy to be a part of it.

The event was held at The Trail Head in downtown Missoula and amongst gear racks, attendees had the chance to chat with Ryan one-on-one and to ask him hard questions in a live Q&A.

From the evening, one thing was clear, and that is that we have a lot of work to do to elect a pro-conservation governor. But the energy is building and we’re happy to be a part of it!

## Happy Birthday to our Montana State Constitution!



For over 50 years, our best in the nation Constitution has **protected our Montana way of life.** From a right to privacy, a right to know, to our right to a clean and healthful environment, there is a lot to celebrate about this document. It has withstood the test of time, and has ensured that despite ill-intentioned efforts at the State Legislature, that our rights have remained protected. That is something to celebrate!

One of the most important ways that our constitutional rights remain strong is through the courts. Our current pro-conservation Supreme Court has struck down laws that threaten our rights, highlighting the importance of our three co-equal branches of government. Some legislators would like you to believe that we have “activist judges.” But in reality, those judges are doing their duty to uphold our constitutional rights.

So, on our Constitution’s 51st birthday, let’s make sure we celebrate the protections it provides us, and those that have upheld those protections. Here’s to 51 more years of a clean and healthful environment!

## It’s Official! Team MCV News



Each year, MCV members must consider and vote on new directors who have joined the Board of Directors in the past year and those who are seeking renewal of their terms. **We are pleased to announce that Brandon Cechovic was approved to officially continue his service** with the MCV board. Brandon has provided valuable fundraising experience and strategic support since joining in June 2023, and we are grateful for his continued support. Thanks to the members who participated in online voting!



**We welcome Anna Shaffer**, who comes to MCV after eight years as a journalist at the *Casper Star-Tribune*, Wyoming’s largest news organization.

She worked her way up from sports clerk to interim editor-in-chief. She had a hand in every part of the newsroom from reporting and editing to design and production. Growing up in Wyoming grew her passion for the outdoors, instilled a desire to be a good steward of this world, and to leverage her skills as a journalist to further conservation efforts. In her off time Anna can be found fishing, skiing, hiking or anything else that gets her in the mountain air.

## Save Our Smith!

At the end of February, the Montana Supreme Court reversed a lower court's decision and allowed the Department of Environmental Quality's permit for the Black Butte Copper mine to move forward. While this is a huge blow to our efforts to protect the Smith – Montana's only permitted river – there are still ways to protect this beloved river.

On March 29, the Supreme Court will be hearing arguments in a case challenging illegal water use by the mine. This lawsuit was filed by the same coalition of conservation groups that filed the previous lawsuit. If the Supreme Court rules in their favor, the mine will be unable to move forward without access to water.

Finally, we can continue to urge the Forest Service to issue a mineral withdrawal on the public lands surrounding the proposed mine. This will ensure that the mine cannot expand beyond the private land boundaries.

Sign the petition by visiting:  
[meic.org/bill-tracker/#/150](https://meic.org/bill-tracker/#/150)



## Field Notes from Natalie Wright

We have field organizers in Billings, Bozeman, and the Flathead who are responsible for canvassing, outreach & engagement, and being the face of Team MCV in their own communities.

February 22, 2024

Working at MCV has shown me the hopeful reality that there is more common ground than the narrative of political polarization would have us believe! Don't get me wrong – there's definitely people who hear 'solar panels' and totally shut down, but more often than not, even people whose ideology doesn't align with MCV's are receptive to a conversation. People just want to be heard! And the more I talk to them, the clearer it becomes to me that the things MCV fights for — especially public lands — are places where all stripes of people can (literally) come together."

— Natalie Wright, Flathead Valley

## Fueling Future Leaders: Join Us in Supporting Our Community Field Program!

The MCV Education Fund is making moves with our community localized communications field program that launched just after the municipal races concluded in November. Organizing is not only an effective way to educate Montanans, but also a proving ground for newcomers to develop their own skills as leaders in their communities as Field Organizers.

## Put simply, people care about what happens in their hometowns — and they talk about it.

Given the success of our January and February campaigns, Team MCV is now expanding its mail, digital, and canvassing operations by at least doubling our target audience. We believe that localizing our messaging will generate word of mouth about the issues, helping preserve persuasion effects over time. Put simply, people care about what happens in their hometowns and they talk about it.

To support the MCV Education Fund and work like this, please return the enclosed remittance envelope or scan the QR code so we can continue to train the next generation of leaders and keep up the conversation on keeping Montana the Last Best Place.



## SAVE THE DATES!

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20

#### Public Lands Paint N' Sip

at Last Best Brewing in [Bozeman](#) | 5-8 pm



### THURSDAY, MARCH 21

#### Storytelling and Public Lands Advocacy

at Steep Mountain in [Bozeman](#) | 5-8 pm

### FRIDAY, MARCH 22

#### Montana Constitution Adoption Day and the Anniversary of the Signing of the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27

**Bingo** at American Legion in [Bozeman](#) | 6-8 pm

#### Public Lands Paint N' Sip

at Blackstar in [Whitefish](#) | 6-8 pm

### TUESDAY, APRIL 2

#### Montana Conservation Trivia

at Bias Brewing in [Kalispell](#) | 6-8 pm

### THURSDAY, APRIL 11

#### Northwest Montana Student Career Fair

at Flathead County Fairgrounds in [Kalispell](#) | 9-11:30 am

For more event information, email [mcv@mtvoters.org](mailto:mcv@mtvoters.org)

## Call for Super Volunteers! 2024 is ramping up and we need your help!



Want to help get MCV word out in your community?

Want to sign powerful opinion pieces, share your insights in print and radio, testify at critical legislative hearings and other official meetings, and even participate in phone banking and door knocking?

If so, then being a Super Volunteer is for you! And with the candidate filing deadline behind us, Super Volunteers have first access to being on MCV endorsement panels. We are looking for dedicated and active MCV members to become the face of our movement in their communities. We're talking about being the swift responders in the dynamic worlds of conservation and politics.

We've already started building our army of volunteers, but we also want YOU! It takes a village to move the needle, so we hope that you join ours and help us create change.

**You can be a part of the revolution by filling out our questionnaire.** [tinyurl.com/MCVvolunteerform](https://tinyurl.com/MCVvolunteerform)

If you're already a part of our team, it's because you share our commitment. Please consider taking it to the next level and joining us as we continue to champion all that makes Montana the Treasure State. The adventure awaits!



## MCV Member of the Month

**Pat Tucker**

Hamilton, MT

### Why are you an MCV member?

Montana Conservation Voters is the go-to organization for information and advice about candidates for office in Montana and ballot initiatives. MCV researches candidate's stances on issues making it easy for voters to understand they will be advocating for and opposing. Likewise with ballot initiatives, which can be confusing for citizens to untangle. I also admire the dedication and enthusiasm of the staff. Encouraging voting through direct action is a high priority for me.

### What's your top conservation issue and why?

As a hiker, backpacker, and skier, protecting public lands for recreation and wildlife is of huge importance to me. Certainly maintaining water and air quality are concerns, as is climate change. Air quality degradation caused by smoke from unprecedented wildfire caused by climate change is affecting all Montanans' health and quality of life whether they consider themselves conservationists or not. MCV helps people make that connection.

### Where is your favorite outdoor spot in Montana?

I feel lucky to have so many favorite places close at hand. But my go-to, walk-out-my-door places are Mill and Blodgett Canyons in the Bitterroots, together with their flanks and rims. I've explored them for forty years, they always surprise me, and never disappoint. I love being off-trail and finding new routes in these canyons.

### Are you following us on social media?

Dive into the latest updates, behind-the-scenes action, and exciting news from Team MCV. Engage with us, share your thoughts, and let's build a stronger community dedicated to environmental stewardship!

@mtvoters    @mtvoters and @mtvotersedfund  
 @mtvoters    Montana Conservation Voters

Montana Conservation Voters is a 501(c)4 nonprofit organization, and membership dues and contributions are not tax-deductible. Tax-deductible contributions may be made to the MCV Education Fund, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Visit [mtvotersedfund.org](https://mtvotersedfund.org) for more information.