

MEDIA RELEASE

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Contact: Juniper Davis
Parks, Trails and Open Lands Manager
jdavis@missoulacounty.us



Missoula County to Celebrate Land Stewardship Award Recipients at Site Visit

Missoula Board of County Commissioners and Missoula County Parks, Trails and Open Lands will host a site visit and award presentation to honor the Iverson Family Ranch, the recipient of the 2021 Land Stewardship Award.

The event will take place at 1:45 p.m. Monday, Aug. 23, at their ranch in Potomac. The Iversons, the county commissioners, members of the county's Open Lands Citizen Advisory Committee, the award nominators and stewardship project partners will attend. Members of the media are invited as well.

The Land Stewardship Award recognizes landowners and residents who take stewardship of land and water seriously and are embarking on projects and practices that make a difference for land, water, forests, wildlife and communities. This year's award honors the Iverson family's dedication to land and water stewardship on their property, their work to engage and educate others about stewardship and restoration, and their generations-long commitment to this ethic and effort.

"As a family operation, the Iversons have shown leadership in water and soil management for generations," said Juniper Davis, manager of Missoula County's Parks, Trails and Open Lands division. "Their work sets an example in sustainable agricultural production, reducing conflict between livestock and predators, and forest stewardship. Their diligent efforts also improve the lands for their neighbors and other families who make a living by working the land."

The Iversons' significant land steward practices include:

- Maximizing the efficiency of water use by installing an 8,000-foot gravity flow pipeline to transport water from the creek to the ranch and by using a pivot system.
- Increasing soil organic matter by aerating the soil and minimizing plowing to reduce soil disturbance and aid in carbon sequestration, and rotating field use between haying and grazing to increase soil organic matter.
- Installing a fish screen to prevent fish from being trapped in the ditch, and monitoring stream flow all summer and reducing irrigation use as needed to recharge the creek and support the fishery.
- Waiting to graze cattle in alfalfa hayfields for fall pasture until after the first frost to ensure plants have had time for adequate regrowth to remain healthy for years to come.
- Using seasonal fencing as needed to protect stream riparian zones from fall grazing by cattle.
- Mitigating extended periods of draught by managing for soils rich in organic matter, which helps increase the water holding capacity of the soil, making their operation more

resilient to drought and increasing productivity while decreasing reliance on inorganic fertilizer.

- Actively sharing their expertise with others to include participation in many local activities and in advocating for desirable agricultural policies at the state, national and international levels.

Members of Missoula County's Open Lands Citizens Advisory Committee select the recipients of the Land Stewardship Award annually, with input from local resource experts with the Missoula Conservation District, Missoula County Weed District and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. All 2021 nominees have exemplified excellent stewardship work on their land.

For more information, contact Juniper Davis at jdavis@missoulacounty.us.

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