



## Grow Wild's Education Trailer 7.31.23 Report



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## Introduction

**Project History** For many years, our nonprofit borrowed the Southwest Area Education Trailer to use at our annual Ophir School Invasive Species Field Trip. In 2020, the year of COVID, we thought the event would have to be canceled. However, school staff found a way to host the event and we were able to continue this educational and fun field trip we've been hosting since 2008.

It was then that we realized what an asset the education trailer was and we began to pursue funding to build our own. Fundraising began in late 2020 and continued into early 2021. With initial funding in hand, we designed and ordered our custom trailer.

2021 proved to be busier than ever, with more events, requests for assistance, and more improvements at our native demonstration garden at the Historic Crail Ranch. It was during this time that we paused trailer design and build planning to ensure the busy summer season was the focus. It was also during that time that the board and staff began having discussions about rebranding/renaming. We promptly reported that "pause" to project funders. Change is not easy, but often necessary and we appreciated funders understanding the need to pause the buildout of our education trailer.

In late summer of 2022, we hired a nonprofit consultant to conduct market research and informant interviews to help us make informed decisions on the possible rebrand. With a report in hand, the board acted. In March of 2023, we voted to become Grow Wild.

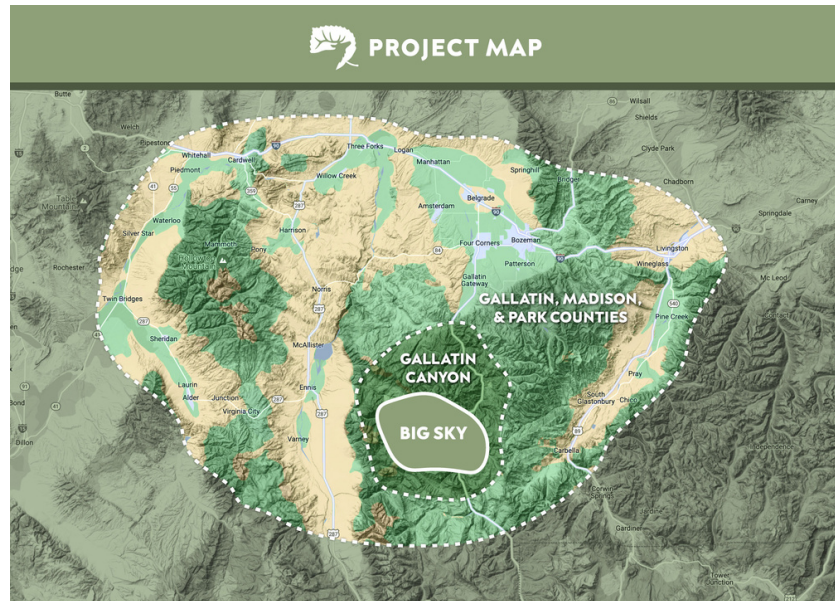
Once the decision was made, staff promptly kicked into high gear to finalize the design and initiate the build to ensure the trailer was ready for the upcoming season. Solar panels were installed, exterior wrap design was finalized, produced and installed. Interior components were ordered and installed.

It was an extremely busy spring, working hard at both building the trailer and implementing our rebranding, but we are beyond thrilled with the results! The trailer's first use was for our annual Native Plant Sale Fundraiser, a fantastic way to kick off the use of such a functional and inspiring mobile education center!



## Introduction Continued

**Location** The education trailer will reside in the Upper Gallatin Watershed/Big Sky but can and will travel throughout Gallatin and Madison County.



**Purpose** The purpose of the trailer is to engage and educate the public on invasive species and their impacts on the ecosystem.

The interactive education trailer will include information, graphics, materials on:

1. Terrestrial & aquatic invasive species
2. Clean recreation practices (Clean.Drain.Dry. and PlayCleanGo)
3. Crail Garden/Wildscapes (promoting the use of native plants in our landscapes)

The education trailer will be used at community events, youth education events, farmers markets, and other Grow Wild and partners venues for years to come!





## Discussion & Results

**Planning Process** At the start of this project, our executive director reached out to Jill Walton, Jefferson County Weed Coordinator and Pam Schwend, Carbon County Weed District, to learn all about their education trailers. Pros and cons, ideas for improvements, and other details were discussed. With those in hand, we began to plan our custom contractor trailer.

**Trailer Design & Build** We worked with local trailer dealers to build the trailer, focusing on long term durability and flexibility. Once that was complete, we pursued multiple bids and selected a dealer that had the best price and was located nearby. The order was placed in late February of 2021, and our focus turned to design of the exterior wrap and interior build.

With lessons learned and ideas inspired by our partner's education trailer, we began planning based on our objectives of teaching people about both terrestrial and aquatic invasive species, adopting clean recreation practices, and promoting the use of native plants in our landscapes.

**Exterior Wrap Design** The exterior wrap design began with us creating mockups to present to the designer. Until the actual trailer was in hand, we couldn't initiate work with the graphic designer as the complexity of the exterior (handles, doors, vendor windows, latches, license plate holder, etc.) and exact measurements were not known. That mock up was completed in April of 2021.

The supply chain issues delayed the arrival of our education trailer, and what was to be a May delivery became a June 30 pickup. As mentioned above, the combination of it being the busy summer season and our organization's interest in looking at rebranding meant this project was put on hold.

With the onset of fall, and even though we were working towards rebranding, we made a concerted effort to reboot the exterior wrap design knowing that certain elements (like our logo) could quickly be swapped out. We measured exterior trailer details (handles, latches, doors, etc.) and began working in earnest to create the exterior wrap design.

That design was completed in April 2023, and that draft was provided to various partners for review (MISC, Gallatin Conservation District, Gallatin County Weed District, etc.). We made edits, and then presented the final draft to partners and funders to ensure proper use of logos. Once feedback was received, we went into production. The trailer was picked up on May 30.

**Interior Design & Build** Interior design began during our discussions with partners, taking the best of the example trailers and incorporating those elements. Lists were made, photos collected, and brainstorming began. In the fall of 2021, we returned to interior design planning after our busy summer season. We secured interior graphics, ordered custom wildflower & weed artwork, and designed custom posters. Draft plans were completed by the end of 2022 and put on hold until we had completed the rebranding process, specifically finalizing our new logo. Once our new logo was finalized, we quickly finalized custom interior door graphics and those, along with wildflower & weed posters, were produced and installed. Custom felt tiles were designed and installed, as well as custom wood "shelving" to hold Ricker Plant Mounts.



**Additional Trailer Components** In the spring of 2023, we began planning and building a few other custom features that would improve outreach, engage people, and advance our conservation message.

We built:

- Custom A-Frames - the large A-frame has a poster and brochure/literature holders on each side. The smaller one has a whiteboard on one side, and at this time, is blank on the other. We will either add brochure holders or use felt tiles (that act as a cork board) to the other.
- Noxious Ned - our trailer mascot! In 2021, Amy and Steve created "Noxious Ned" as their submission to our Noxious Weed Bouquet Contest. They won the contest and we couldn't get this creation out of our mind. In spring of 2022, we reached out and inquired to see if they would be interested in creating a Noxious Ned for our education trailer. Ned has a beard of oxeye daisy and will have further noxious weed species added to his hair, hands, and other features.



**Trailer Interior** The interior of the trailer was designed for invasive species to be on one side of the trailer, with native species highlighted on the other.

Sections of the trailer include (from back to front):

- Ricker plant mounts.
- Weed & Wildflower Posters by Nancy Seiler applied to the interior of vendor windows.
- Felt tiles (which are pin-able like corkboard) that depict a winter mountain scene and a summer mountain scene. Information, matching games, and more can then be applied to the walls.





**Trailer Interior Continued** The front of trailer, above the storage cabinets, is also lined with felt tiles. In the center is a TV, and both sides will showcase custom made paper weeds & wildflowers (and a butterfly & wasp) made by Linda Hamilton of Daydream Flowers. Her creations include:

- 8 noxious weeds: Canada thistle, Hoary Alyssum, Houndstoungue, Musk Thistle, Oxeye Daisy, Spotted Knapweed, Yellow Toadflax, & Cheatgrass.
- 13 native wildflowers: Arrowleaf Balsamroot, Showy Fleabane, Silvery Lupine, Sticky Geranium, Rocky Mountain Iris, Mountain Hollyhock, Blanket Flower, Sagebrush Buttercup, Beebalm, Rocky Mountain Penstemon, Cutleaf Coneflower, Pasqueflower, & Elk Thistle.
- 2 grasses & sage: Bluebunch Wheatgrass, Idaho Fescue, & Prairie Sage.
- Edwards Fritillary butterfly
- Pollen wasp
- 2 wooden bases for display

While we have the artwork in hand, we need to procure custom acrylic protective cases before we can display them. That process will be initiated after our Big Sky Wildflower Festival, July 10-14.



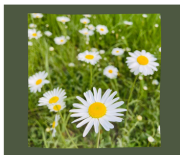


**Trailer Interior Continued** Storage cabinets display a series of 4 posters by artist Kate Dolamore:

- Butterflies of Montana
- Mammals of Montana
- Freshwater Fish of Montana
- Birds of Montana

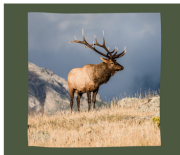
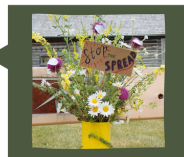


The interior of both man doors display custom posters highlighting invasive plants and native plants/Crair Gardens on the other.



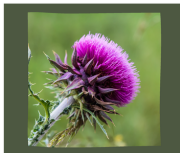
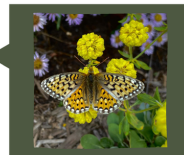
**Pretty Wildflowers?**  
Think again! Oxeye daisy is an invasive plant.  
"Invasive plants are ecological tumors that won't stay in your yard."  
- Dr. Doug Tallamy

**Noxious Weeds...**  
are invasive plant species that establish easily, grow quickly, and spread to the point of disrupting biological communities or ecosystems.



**Habitat Transformers**  
Noxious weeds are known as "habitat transformers" because they change the physical structure and forage availability in habitats, eventually pushing out resident wildlife.

**Biodiversity Threat**  
Invasive species are capable of causing extinctions of native plants and animals, reducing biodiversity.



**Invasive Species...**

- Replace native plant communities
- Accelerate soil erosion
- Degrade water quality
- Damage fish & wildlife habitat
- Decrease the value of land
- Reduce recreational opportunities
- Increase trail maintenance costs

A noxious weed is defined by Montana Law as "any exotic plant species established or that may be introduced in the state that may render land unfit for agriculture, forestry, livestock, wildlife, or other beneficial uses or that may harm native plant communities."



In 2019, we built a demonstration garden at Crair Ranch using native plants that are wildlife friendly, water wise, and preserving of the historic landscape.

<p>Native plants are adapted to local conditions, requiring less fertilizer and pesticides.</p>	<p>Native plants require less watering to thrive and can help control stormwater runoff.</p>
<p>Native plants improve air quality by reducing areas for mowing and sequestering carbon.</p>	<p>Native plants provide food and shelter for wildlife and support pollinators.</p>



Native plants and eco-friendly gardening practices provide natural sources of the four elements of habitat:



In our 2nd full growing season, a white-crowned sparrow nested and successfully reared her young among the prairie sage in our largest garden.



*Visit* Crair Gardens is located at the Historic Crair Ranch, 2100 Spotted Elk Rd, Big Sky, and is open for touring during daylight hours 7 days a week.





**Trailer Interior Continued** We are thrilled with the trailer interior and have plans to continue to add and improve it. Specifically, we are keen to create a graphic to add to the ceiling. But that will wait until our busy season slows and we find additional funding. This trailer will be a most enjoyable work in progress!





# Invasive Species Education Trailer

Dear Director Mohler,

Please forward this email to the governing board of GROW WILD and any appropriate funding partners.

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear GROW WILD Board,

On Wednesday, June 21st, I had the privilege of touring the GROW WILD display at the Big Sky Farmers Market. It was absolutely phenomenal. My visit also included conversations with both Director Mohler and Sean. As a guest to your community, an educator, and one who is familiar with eradicating noxious weeds in my own community, I feel qualified to give the highest of accolades!

**INVITING and INTERACTIVE:** Both Director Mohler and Sean greeted my husband and I at the booth on Wednesday. They were truly passionate about the information and genuinely interested to hear about how they could support or educate us.

**OBVIOUS:** The display and materials made GROW WILD's mission and purpose very obvious. Conserve-Educate-Inspire around native vs invasive species and conserving the watershed ecosystems.

**EDUCATIONAL:** Through conversation and incredible displays, the visit to the Farmers Market Booth was very educational. As a visitor, I learned about native plants and was given a special invitation to visit the Crail Garden. There were other resources specifically for Big Sky Residents to aid in educating them to support GROW WILD's mission.

**IMPRESSIVE:** Let me just say, "Wow!" The trailer display was so carefully crafted and designed to make fabulous use of the space and every inch was professional, engaging, and educational. The content met the needs of a diverse audience. I can see toddlers enjoying the bright colors and textures and adult and seniors enjoying the opportunity to read and learn. The free stickers would capture a teen's eye and the items used to raise funds were enticing!

GROW WILD was the highlight of my Farmers Market experience at Big Sky. **AMAZING** and **PASSIONATE** staff with great resources to carry out your mission.

My favorite second experience, while in your community, was visiting Crail Gardens today. The gardens are beautiful, the bees were happy, and I loved seeing so many plants labeled! **KUDOS!**

My only advice: if these ladies ask for something to help them further your mission, listen careful and find the funding to provide. 😊 You have two gems!!

Sincerely, Karen Douglass  
Stevenson, WA





# Invasive Species Education Trailer

**Incomplete Tasks** While all tasks have been completed, we will continue to work on the following:

- Complete the paper wildflowers & weeds display. We need to finalize an order for an acrylic protective case and install in the front of the education trailer.
- Compile files of videos and slide shows that will rotate playing on the TV.
- Fundraise, design, and install an educational graphic on the ceiling.
- Continue to pursue opportunities to use our education trailer at community events of all types!

**Problems Encountered & Solutions Adopted** As mentioned previously, problems encountered and solutions adopted were:

- Supply chain disruptions resulted in delay of trailer delivery. There was not much we could do about this, thus we prepared the design and build during that time.
- Rebranding of our nonprofit. We worked diligently to inform funders and partners of this endeavor and acted as quickly as possible to ensure the trailer would be in use for summer 2022.

## Natural Resource & Public Benefits

**Natural Resource Benefits** Our project area encompasses some of the most ecologically and economically important resources in the state, providing vital habitat and water for plants, wildlife, and the people who live and recreate in the area. Invasive species replace native plant communities, increase soil erosion, degrade water quality, damage fish & wildlife habitat, reduce the value of land, decrease recreation & hunting opportunities, increase maintenance costs (including trails), and diminish recreational experiences.

The clean recreation messages, promotion of our native demonstration garden, and overall conservation message displayed by this trailer will help promote the protection and conservation of natural resources.

**Public Benefits** This project was designed to educate the public, inspire the community, and advocate for conservation practices that maintain the ecological integrity and economic health of the community. This project aims to address and mitigate the impacts of human activity upon natural resources to ensure that what we love so much about this place is not destroyed by our pursuit to experience it.

While we have only been utilizing this trailer for a bit over a month, the public's reception of it has exceeded our expectations! By informing the public about the multitude of problems caused by invasive species, the education trailer will help prevent the establishment and spread of invasive species, thereby protecting the function and resiliency of native ecosystems upon which our lives, economy, and lifestyle are based.

Folks have been educated about invasive species, about both invasive and native species and been inspired to practice clean recreation. The best part is that this trailer will continue to educate for years to come!





## Work Schedule

### **Original Schedule:**

- Fundraise for trailer October 2020 - February 2021.
- Design & purchase trailer January - February 2021.
- Design January - May 2021.
- Receive trailer April 2021 and build out.
- This project aimed to move forward as fast as possible so that the education trailer can be ready for as much of the 2022 season as possible.

As mentioned previously, rebranding of our nonprofit delayed implementation by 1 year. The delay provided us time to improve our exterior and interior design, find unique and engaging materials (such as felt tiles and paper wildflowers/weeds), and create an education trailer that we can not only use for years to come, but can also continue to improve over time.

Most importantly, this delay allowed our nonprofit the time and space to reflect on our past and plan for our future. Our new logo features two keystone species, an aspen leaf and an elk, and an abundance of each indicates a thriving ecosystem. This represents our renewed focus on the healthy aspects of our ecosystems rather than emphasizing only the threats. Real, positive change is possible.

The inspiring success of Crail Gardens, our native plant demonstration garden at the Historic Crail Ranch, has reminded us that our purpose is, at its heart, about growth: growing native plants, growing our community of responsible land stewards, and growing our positive impact on the critical habitats that surround us.

### **Actual Schedule:**

- Fundraise for trailer October 2020 - March 2022.
- Design & purchase trailer January - February 2021.
- Receive trailer June 2021.
- Design exterior and interior January 2021 - April 2022 (pause for rebranding)
- Begin using June 1, 2023.



# Invasive Species Education Trailer

## Budget & Match Funds

### Income & In Kind

Grow Wild - Education Trailer		
Income		
Source	Funds Awarded	Funds Received To Date <i>*Get \$ once project completed</i>
Private Donations	\$5,100	\$5,194
Big Sky Resot Area District	\$4,500	\$4,549
Moonlight Community Foundation 2022 Spring Grant	\$9,500	\$9,500
Spanish Peaks Community Foundation 2022 Spring Grant	\$2,500	\$2,500
Yellowstone Club Community Foundation 2022 Fall Grant	\$5,000	\$5,000
DNRC / MISC AIS Grant*	\$2,500	
Madison-Gallatin Trout Unlimited	\$1,000	\$1,000
DRNC 223 Grant via Gallatin Conservation District*	\$10,000	
Madison County	\$1,250	\$1,250
Gallatin County*	\$1,250	
Montana Native Plant Society*	\$1,000	\$500
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	\$1,000	\$1,000
Gallatin River Task Force	\$1,000	\$1,000
Big Sky Community Organization	\$700	\$700
MT Dept of Ag	\$500	\$500
Spanish Peaks Community Foundation 2023 Spring Grant	\$9,962	\$9,962
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$56,762</b>	<b>\$42,655</b>
In Kind		
Photo use (3) donation - Singing Sky Photography	\$2,250	\$2,250
Technical editing services - Bridger Scientific	\$50	\$50
Photo use (1) donation - Holly Pipple Photography	\$750	\$750
Discount on mobile step - Four Coners Saddlery	\$10	\$10
Custom wood mobile a-frames - build donation - Bridger Scientific	\$3,750	\$3,750
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,810</b>	<b>\$6,810</b>

#### Notes

- We have yet to receive \$14,250 in awarded funds.
- We expect to see in kind contributions increase over the next few months.



# Invasive Species Education Trailer

## Budget & Match Funds Expense

Expenses		
Phase 1: Trailer Purchase	Actual	Quote / Estimate
Custom Contractor Trailer: fully insulated, rear ramp, 2 man doors, 2 flip up vendor windows on each side, tv and cabinet, 2 benches	\$29,276	
Solar Panels (190W panels, controller, & installation)	\$1,771	
Registration	\$214	
Insurance	\$177	
Phase 2: Exterior Design & Build		
Exterior Wrap Design (Outlaw)	\$2,176	
Exterior Wrap Production (RAU DeSigns)	\$5,929	
iStock - photos	\$93	
Phase 3: Interior Design & Build		
Native & Noxious Weed Illustrations - by Nancy Seiler Designs (vendor door posters x2)	\$2,660	
Custom flower display Daydream Flowers (7 noxious weeds, 13 native wildflowers, 4 grasses/sage)	\$2,768	
Ricker plant mounts	\$360	
Felt Right Interior Wall Art (2 walls, front 3 panels & 2 floor sections)	\$686	
Montana flora & fauna (4) posters - lamination and backing	\$257	
2 custom mobile A-frames (materials & labor)	\$2,200	
Brochure, Literature holders, Baskets, Whiteboard	\$514	
Ceiling art - custom Canada thistle poster ( <i>design &amp; install</i> )		\$1,500
General materials for interior build	\$1,404	
Hitch Lock	\$57	
Protective Winter Cover		\$1,500
Project Management		\$3,600
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$50,542</b>	<b>\$6,600</b>
	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$57,142</b>
	<b>Net</b>	<b>-\$380</b>

**Total expenses - total income**      **\$7,887**      \*matches net income on quickbooks report

### Notes

- We are pleased to report that our conservative estimates meant we stayed just within budget.
- The only increase in expense vs estimate was project management, which was due to project delay and complexity.
- No unbudgeted expenses arose.
- This project is not fully complete, but the numbers demonstrate we are on target.



## Photos



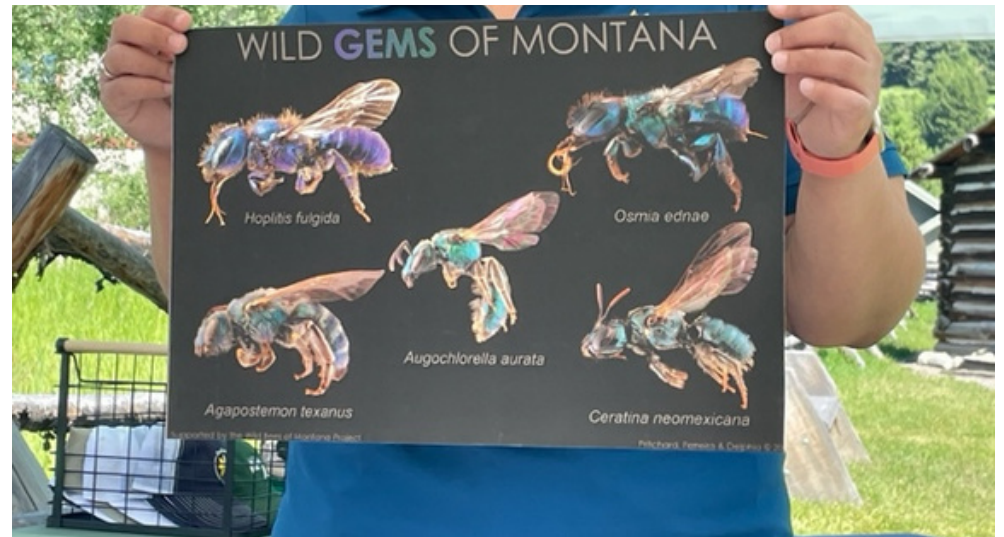


## Additional Photos





## Big Sky Wildflower Festival Photos





## Thank you project partners & funders!

We are beyond thrilled with our education trailer and have loved putting it into action this year!

Receiving the complimentary email from Karen Douglass was icing on the cake and confirmed what we thought - that this education trailer is, and will continue to be, an engaging and educational tool to promote conservation of our natural resources!

