

# Missoula County Media Release

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## **Missoula County to Celebrate Land Stewardship Award Recipients at Ceremony, Site Visit**

Missoula County Community and Planning Services will host a site visit and award presentation to honor Bart and Wendy Morris, the recipients of the 2019 Land Stewardship Award.

The event will take place at 3 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 7, at the Oxbow Cattle Company, which the couple has sustainably ranched at since 2014. The property is located at 6215 Haugan Drive in Lower Miller Creek. The county commissioners, members of the county's Open Lands Citizen Advisory Committee and the award nominators will all attend.

The Land Stewardship Award recognizes landowners and residents who are taking stewardship of land and water seriously and embarking on projects and practices that make a difference for land, water, forests, wildlife and communities. This year's award honors the Morrises for their all-encompassing philosophy that focuses comprehensively on stewarding for land, community and animals, both wildlife and domestic.

As a business, Oxbow aims to provide customers with the highest quality beef, improve ecological integrity of the land through good stewardship and contribute to the community. Their high standards for land management and stewardship practices on their ranch, as well as on the private and public lands they lease, reflect this goal.

"The Morris' conservation and stewardship ethics are evident in every aspect of their lives," said Kylie Paul, Missoula County natural resource specialist. "Bart and Wendy are committed to the long-term sustainability of agriculture within our communities and have done an exceptional job involving and engaging others in stewardship activities."

The Morrises' significant land steward practices include:

- Protecting their legacy through a 168-acre conservation easement on their land that conserves open space for continued agricultural production, important agricultural soils, and fish and wildlife habitat.
- Design and installation of wildlife-friendly fences.
- Building healthy soil through use of cover crop seed mixtures and intensive rotational grazing systems, as well as low-stress livestock care.
- Encouraging riparian area conservation around Miller Creek through vegetation planting and fencing.

- Working with the Missoula office of the Natural Resources Conservation Services to develop spring-fed water sources to prevent damage to water features from cattle spending too much time in one area.
- Working with NRCS and renewable energy specialists to install an off-the-grid water pump using solar and geothermal energy, allowing for year-round water flow for livestock and seasonal crop rotation.
- Investing in future stewards through educational partnerships with local organizations and agencies and frequently hosting volunteers, students and community visitors on their land. They regularly collaborate with organizations including NRCS, Five Valleys Land Trust, Bitterroot Water Forum, MPG Ranch, Ecology Project International, Community Food & Agriculture Coalition and several University of Montana departments.

Recipients of the Land Stewardship Award are selected annually by members of Missoula County's Open Lands Citizens Advisory Committee with input from local resource experts with the Missoula Conservation District, Missoula County Weed District and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

For more information, call Kylie Paul at 406-258-4869 or email [kpaul@missoulacounty.us](mailto:kpaul@missoulacounty.us).

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