

1,000 acres of farmland near Toston now a conservation easement

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Prickly Pear Land Trust recently completed a conservation easement along the Missouri River between Townsend and Toston.

Courtesy Photo

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Prickly Pear Land Trust recently added more than 1,000 acres of prime, irrigated farmland and over 1.6 miles of Missouri River shoreline to a list of protected properties, marking what officials said is its second conservation easement in Broadwater County.

The Tri G River Ranch, between Toston and Townsend, is the latest project completed by PPLT in its partnership with the Montana Army National Guard and the Department of Defense's base conservation buffer program, trust officials said.

It is the first project in the water and soil-rich valley downstream of the Toston dam, the PPLT, a nonprofit land conservation group, said.

Over the last year, PPLT staff worked with property owners to assemble permanent protection to keep this highly productive farm from being lost to development. The conservation easement also protects a popular stretch of the Missouri River with fish and wildlife habitat that supports the local outdoor economy.

The project reflects PPLT's mission of protecting key, open properties that provide not only for wildlife but also protect the state's farm and ranch heritage, officials with the nonprofit said.

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Mary Hollow, Prickly Pear Land Trust

“You drive right through it between Helena and Bozeman and now, it is protected and will remain as open farmland forever. The value of open space like that will only increase in the future,” Mary Hollow, executive director of PPLT, said in a news release.

She said this was a “generous legacy that this family is leaving” and that PPLT was happy to be a small part of it.

Travis Vincent, project lead for Tri G, said they have been working in the Townsend area for a couple of years.

“We hope to see farmers and ranchers working the land long into the future. We want the land to stay in agriculture.”

Prickly Pear Land Trust and the Montana Army National Guard worked to protect over 1,700 acres around Fort Harrison and the Limestone Hills Training Area. The Tri G River Ranch joins the Sevenmile restoration, Tenmile Creek Park and land on Mount Helena that expands the region's conservation footprint while helping to ensure the Army National Guard's training mission.

Maj. Gen. J. Peter Hronek, adjutant general for Montana and head of the Montana National Guard, said they were pleased with the partnership with the Prickly Pear Land Trust.

"Conservation easement projects like this help preserve this land for future generations of Montanans while also ensuring we have the ability to continue to use nearby training areas," he said.

To respect the privacy of the landowner-partners, PPLT asks the public direct their questions about this project and the lands program to PPLT staff at **(406) 442-0490**.



Maj. Gen. J. Peter Hronek