

## Y2Y Partner Profiles

Working with organizations like the West Moberly First Nations and American Wildlands helps Y2Y leverage the important work being done in both Canada and the United States.

### CANADA

The West Moberly First Nations (WMFN) is intimately involved in land and resource issues in the Peace River Break. In a region with a small conservation base, the Nation is an important voice for stewardship and conscious development.

"Y2Y's interest in protecting the connectivity of the land is something our elders have talked long about," says Chief Roland Willson. Connectivity is more than an abstract concept here - Peace River Break has been a significant transportation and trade route, and an important link to fish and wildlife resources, for First Nations people for thousands of years.

WMFN has a reserve of 2,033 hectares, and a community at the west end of Moberly Lake, 56 miles (90 kilometers) southwest of Fort St. John. The Nation has already experienced the serious consequences of fragmentation, most notably with the construction of Williston Reservoir, which isolated and decimated a caribou herd. The proposed Site C Dam and other pending developments could severely impact the region's ecological integrity and cultural legacy, and essentially hinder crucial corridors for wildlife and critical habitat many species rely on.

Among other activities, the Nation has been involved in developing a management plan for the Peace Moberly Tract, 421 square miles (1,090 square kilometers) of land between Moberly Lake and the Peace River. But it's been a frustrating experience on many fronts.

"The government tried to say there are no grizzlies in the area to worry about. But the elders of West Moberly and Saulteau say there's a family of grizzly bears that wander through Saulteau's reserve every year," says Councilor Clarence Willson. Bringing Y2Y into the management-plan discussions, armed with data on wildlife movements, would be useful, Willson says. "We have a vested interest in ensuring that bears maintain their way of life. If the bears go, we go. Our culture is based on the land and the wildlife."

WMFN councilors agree that the most important thing before them is getting a handle on development. "We're not opposed to development," Chief Willson notes, "we just need to have a balanced approach."

Development pressure is intensifying, with proposals for oil and gas development, coalbed methane development, coal mining, and logging. The cumulative effects could have devastating consequences on the land, wildlife, and people.

For more information visit, [www.treaty8.bc.ca/communities/west-moberly.php](http://www.treaty8.bc.ca/communities/west-moberly.php).

### UNITED STATES

As the well-known naturalist and conservationist Aldo Leopold once wrote, "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community." For American Wildlands, the 'thing' ensuring the grand nature of the Northern Rockies is 'right' is keeping the region's best habitats ecologically connected to each other, as part of a whole, intact natural system.

American Wildlands is a regional organization working to maintain connections between key habitats in the US Northern Rockies in order to ensure healthy populations of native wildlife – whether it be connections between the Greater Yellowstone, Salmon-Selway and Crown of the Continent ecosystems, or more localized habitat links between winter and summer ranges. For 30 years, American Wildlands has used science, respectful advocacy and community engagement to pursue its vision of a region with interconnected habitats supporting bears, wolves, cougars, lynx, elk, moose, bighorn sheep and other Rocky Mountain wildlife. AWL – as the organization is referred to – sees its niche as complementing the work of other organizations which focus on protecting and conserving the core habitats of this world-renowned region.

American Wildlands is best-known as the organization that put wildlife corridors in the US Northern Rockies on the map – both figuratively and literally – through its pioneering work in the mid-1990s to map core habitat areas and connect wildlife corridors across the region. This project became the foundation of AWL's current *Corridors of Life* program, and has been used by government and non-government organizations of all stripes.

When word got out that AWL was well-versed in GIS analysis and mapping, other conservation partners began asking for this technical expertise, and AWL initiated its discounted or pro-bono Community GIS Services program. Most recently, AWL initiated a *Safe Passages* program which promotes the ecological, economic and human safety benefits of wildlife safe passages across highways and railroads, and establishes a regional management and decision-making culture supporting implementation of these measures.

Working from their offices in the heart of the region (Bozeman and Missoula), AWL has a staff of 11 with a combined 65 years of conservation experience, and a Board of Directors that live throughout the region. To learn more, visit [www.wildlands.org](http://www.wildlands.org).

