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## The Enchanted Forest Project

<b>Applying Organization</b>	Vital Ground Foundation	<b>Application Date</b>	5/12/2026
<b>Applying Contact</b>	Kim Davitt	<b>Status</b>	Submitted
<b>Record Type</b>	Member Collective	<b>Created By</b>	Kim Davitt, 5/12/2026, 12:22 PM
		<b>Create Account</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Project Overview

<b>Project Name</b>	The Enchanted Forest Project	<b>Requested Amount</b>	\$50,000.00
<b>Project/Campaign Name</b>	The Enchanted Forest Project		
<b>Type of Project</b>	Acquisition	<b>Project Multiple Locations</b>	
<b>Project Location (State or Territory)</b>	ID	<b>Longitude</b>	-116.303291
<b>Latitude</b>	48.231717		

### Organization Details

<b>Organization Name</b>	The Vital Ground Foundation	<b>Primary address for organization</b>	27 Fort Missoula Road Suite 2 Missoula, 59804
<b>Contact Name</b>	Kim Davitt	<b>Contact Title</b>	Development Director
<b>Contact Email Address</b>	kdavitt@vitalground.org		
<b>Annual Operating Budget</b>	\$3,341,975.00	<b>Tax Status/Organization Type</b>	501c3 Organization
<b>Staff Size</b>	14	<b>Main Phone</b>	14065522544
<b>Total Membership</b>	6,300	<b>Organization Website/Social Media Feed</b>	http://www.vitalground.org
<b>BIPOC-led</b>	No	<b>C-Suite Staff</b>	

### Grant Details

<b>Awarded Amount</b>		<b>Awarded Date</b>	
<b>Funding Program</b>			
<b>Primary Project Type</b>		<b>Secondary Project Type</b>	
<b>Term Start Date</b>		<b>Term End Date</b>	

### Proposal Questions

<b>Mission/History Of Organization</b>	The Vital Ground Foundation restores grizzly bear populations and provides lasting large landscape conservation by permanently protecting and connecting the most important private lands in the Northern Rocky Mountains through	<b>Location Details</b>	Vital Ground has the extremely rare opportunity to purchase and permanently protect from development a large, forested 1,136-acre parcel of grizzly bear habitat in the Northern Rocky Mountains. The parcel, located in northern Idaho's
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conservation easements, land acquisitions and partnerships with local communities to provide the social habitat that promotes wildlife movement through the landscape. To date, Vital Ground has helped to protect and conserve more than 1 million acres, including the organization's direct purchase of 35 land acquisitions and 36 easements on more than 15,500 acres. Our work helps restore one of the richest wildlife communities in North America.

Paradise Valley, lies in the Cabinet Mountain foothills, bolsters habitat security within the Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone, and helps provide landscape-level connectivity from Glacier National Park to the Selkirk Mountains. The Enchanted Forest project also expands recreational opportunities and access to nature for the residents living near the rural town of Bonners Ferry.

Idaho is the second fastest growing state in the nation. From 2010-2023, Idaho's population grew by 25.3%. The influx of new and second-home residents in northern Idaho has caused a dramatic rise in real estate prices and interest in the area is expected to intensify. The arrival of new residents and recreationists not only impacts habitat but also increases potential conflicts between bears and humans; attractants like garbage, bird feeders, small livestock, and fruit trees can lure grizzly bears and other carnivores into neighborhoods and trouble.

The Enchanted Forest is a large private land holding amidst large blocks of public land (approximately 65-70% of the Idaho Panhandle is public land) and therefore highly sought after for residential development. Purchase of the property by Vital Ground will ensure that the property is never residentially or commercially developed.

The Enchanted Forest property is located between the Paradise Valley and Clifty Mountains in northern Idaho. The 1,136-acre parcel is surrounded by national forest lands on two sides, Vital Ground's 1,647-acre Clifty View Foothills Forest Legacy conservation easement, and private land. Protecting the parcel from development amplifies existing conservation on private lands and expands habitat security in a critical area.

The Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk Mountain grizzly bear populations are the smallest and most threatened in the region. Without large national parks or wilderness areas to anchor the recovery areas, additional secure habitat is needed to bolster their recovery. Grizzly bears act as an umbrella species and protecting habitat for them in northern Idaho conserves biodiversity for one of the richest wildlife communities in North America.

**Final Success**      The Enchanted Forest project protects in perpetuity 1,136 acres of grizzly bear and wildlife habitat from development and maintains 25 miles of hiking and biking trails for recreation opportunities and access to nature.

**Impact on Climate and Biodiversity**

Vital Ground is purchasing the Enchanted Forest property because of its regional importance for grizzly bear habitat, landscape connectivity, biodiversity and climate resilience. These conservation values are linked; habitat connectivity directly promotes climate

adaptability and resilience as well as biodiversity conservation.

Because grizzly bears serve as an umbrella species, protecting their habitat also conserves biodiversity. The property's location at the northwest foot of the Cabinet Mountains, combined with its elevation, numerous draws and diverse forests and openings, offers excellent wildlife habitat for grizzly bears and all of the native species who share their range.

The property is located in the Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Area, which holds approximately 45-55 grizzlies, the smallest and most threatened grizzly population in the region. The Enchanted Forest offers important spring foraging habitat for bears and high-quality winter range for ungulates, such as white-tailed and mule deer, elk, and moose. Conservation of this property will protect habitat for numerous federally-listed and sensitive wildlife species, including Canada lynx, gray wolf, wolverine, fisher, and peregrine falcon. Beavers, pine marten, mountain lions and red foxes also inhabit the Enchanted Forest.

The property contains three streams - Dobson Creek, Cabin Creek and Brush Creek - that provide habitat for native fish and directly contribute to the water quality of the Kootenai River. Dobson Creek provides habitat for westslope cutthroat trout and represents some of the furthest inland penetration of Redband Trout in the Columbia River Drainage. Both of these native fish are listed as species of concern by state and federal agencies.

The Enchanted Forest project area provides lasting conservation as identified by The Nature Conservancy's climate resilience model. It's location in the Cabinet Mountain foothills and the abundance of streams and wetlands on the property rank it above-average for climate resilience with recognized biodiversity values. The Enchanted Forest offers outside connectivity value and the climate adaptability that corresponds with connected habitat. Due to the combination of permeability values, climate flows and local connectedness, this landscape is climate resilient and its conservation will be both permanent and lasting.

#### **Expected Economic & Recreational Impact**

Bonnars Ferry is the largest city in Boundary County (2,914 population) and closest in proximity to the Enchanted Forest property. In 2023, the city completed their Comprehensive Plan, which supports protection of the beauty, open spaces, recreational opportunities and the rural character of the region to

#### **Strategy & Timeline For Final Success**

Vital Ground aims to purchase the Enchanted Forest property within the next year, which will allow us time to fundraise for the project. We have worked with the landowners on a previous land purchase (Ruby Creek acquisition project in 2025), have built trust, and drafted a contract for the

create economic growth through tourism and business attraction.

Vital Ground will partner with the Farnsworth family on the Enchanted Forest purchase. This 1,136-acre block of timberland was assembled by the family between 1965 and 1978 in four separate acquisitions. For the last 50 years, the family has managed the property for forest thinning, Christmas tree planting and pruning. As the northern Idaho economy transitions from and emphasis on resource extraction to recreational and tourism economic drivers, the Enchanted Forest project also emphasizes the conservation and recreational values that are contributing to the region's economic vitality and quality of life.

The Bonners Ferry Comprehensive Plan specifically seeks to enhance opportunities for outdoor recreational biking and walking trails. The Enchanted Forest property contains 25 miles of biking/hiking trails, a valuable recreational and public access amenity for the Bonner's Ferry outdoor community. The 9B Trails mountain biking group holds a 30-year recreational easement on the property, maintains the trails, and will partner with Vital Ground to ensure that both recreational and ecological goals are met.

property's purchase, which is currently under review. We anticipate that the contract will be signed in May 2026 with a closing date of June 2027. Throughout the summer and fall, our conservation staff will conduct environmental reviews, create a management plan, and coordinate with recreation and conservation partners. By December 2026, we anticipate a sale of the Ruby Creek parcel to a conservation buyer, which will contribute funding for this land purchase.

Development staff will fundraise for the next year and we will develop a suite of communications pieces (photographs, videos, and media) to help with fundraising and building community support. Vital Ground will lose on the project by June 2027.

**Key Decision Makers**

N/A

**Working With Business Community**

Vital Ground has an active Business Partners program, which allows business and corporate partners to directly protect grizzly bear habitat by making financial donations or contributing a percentage of sales. Business Partners share news of their conservation impacts with customers, Vital Ground donors and the general public. A possible conservation outcome of the Enchanted Forest property is a Community Forest, which will be open to public recreation and managed by various stakeholders. This type of high-profile, community-building process would be greatly aided by business support and messaging.

**Elevate Voices**

Vital Ground is currently working on three habitat conservation projects with the owners of the Enchanted Forest property (Ruby Creek, which we purchased last year and Soaring Eagle, a 892-acre property also located in northern Idaho). We are developing a strong partnership with The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho and they are likely to be a significant partner in the long-term conservation of two or three of these properties. The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho has conservation goals that align with Vital Ground's and are in the process purchasing properties to aid in fish and wildlife species recovery. Vital Ground has long and strong commitment to tribal

**Measurable On-Ground Outcomes**

1. Permanent protection of 1,136 acres of grizzly bear habitat from development.
2. Provision of 25 miles of biking and hiking trails.
3. Habitat protection for 20 plant, fish and wildlife species of concern.

partnerships and land-back efforts around the Northern Rocky region.

Vital Ground, partnering with The Nature Conservancy, applied for Forest Legacy funding from the federal government to purchase conservation easements on the Enchanted Forest and several other Farnsworth family holdings in 2011. At that time, there was significant and diverse public and community support for the project. We received letters of support from elected officials, the Kootenai Valley Resources Initiative (KVRI), US Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Wildlife, Inland Forest Management, Forest Capital Partners, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Heart of the Rockies and Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative. These letters indicate diverse community support for protection of the property as a community resource.

**TCA Funding Plan**

The purchase price for the property is \$2.8 million. There are high stewardship and transactional costs due to the price of the appraisal, parcel size and distance from Vital Ground's office. Vital Ground anticipates that we will fund a significant part of the project budget by selling a recently-purchased property to a conservation buyer. We also have a revolving habitat protection fund, which allows us to loan money to ourselves for project completion. We anticipate that the remaining portion of the project budget will be funded by private foundations and individuals. A \$50,000 grant from the Conservation Alliance will make a big difference in this funding gap.

**Confidential Items**

Please keep the name of the landowner and specifics about our partnership with The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho confidential.

**Other Relevant Application Details**

