

Dear MALT Family,

For seven years I have written you an annual appeal letter. Each time, it's been a breeze writing about MALT's successes. For the first time, stories of challenges and hardship come to mind more quickly than highlights. We didn't build new trails or conserve new lands. We suffered the effects of two major weather events, a winter wind storm in December 2022 and torrential rains and flooding in Summer 2023. We said goodbye to two beloved staff, Caleb and Simon. I went on maternity leave for several months leaving two brand new staff to learn the ropes on their own. MALT experienced a lot of hardship in 2023, and up until about a week ago, I was still searching for what I might say in this request for support. Then, I got a letter from Jackson, MALT's former AmeriCorps member who served during the 2022-2023 seasons. As I read it, I knew exactly what to say...

*To My Dear MALT Family,*

*I write to you from my new home in East Wenatchee, WA. I moved here about two months ago and started my first full time job in conservation at Foster Creek Conservation District as the Voluntary Stewardship Program Coordinator for Douglas County. In some ways working at Foster Creek is much different than working at MALT. We spend a lot of time making sure we follow guidelines attached to our grants and attend meetings put on by an array of government agencies. But, in a lot of ways things are very similar. I am part of a small, tight knit team. I teach community in a "Salmon in the Classroom" education program. I work outside with landowners, learning side-by-side about their land.*

*I was very lucky to have spent a year in Vermont seeing firsthand the cooperative relationship that can be built between conservation organizations and their local community. MALT was a wonderful place to start my career in conservation. It is a highly effective organization that consistently exceeds expectations of what a small land trust can accomplish. It gave me the skills and experience to be organized, thoughtful, and professional. As I served MALT, it helped me move my life in a direction I am very excited about. A life where I will serve the lands I live on and the people I call my community. I won't soon forget my time at MALT or the formative experiences I had with all of you. I appreciate you trusting me to serve in your community, it was an honor.*



*With gratitude,*

*Jackson Moody (pictured center)  
VHCB AmeriCorps Member 2022-2023  
Middlebury Area Land Trust*

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Although MALT is a bit tired and we had a tough year, Jackson reminded me that MALT never stands only on the feet of those currently at the table. In seven years, we've been guided by over 20 stellar board members. We've grown our membership from 134 to 331 people. We've increased our annual budget from \$80K to over \$300K. We have increased our youth program participants from 60 to nearly 400. We've hosted over 20 AmeriCorps and interns and grown our full time staff from one to four. **During hard times, the inspiration we need does not come from looking at what's right in front of us. It comes from who surrounds us in challenging times.** This organization is lively and resilient and we serve *one community* of people and the environment around us. I just needed a friend like Jackson to remind me of that.



Jackson coordinating removal of invasives at Otter View Park with fellow AmeriCorps Audrey and volunteer Frankie.

Even though it's been a year of challenges, MALT's impact isn't measured solely by the calendar. I hope Jackson's words bring this point home and remind you why your annual gift to MALT is so important. Thank you to Jackson *and to each of you*, for lifting our MALT spirits and helping us set our eyes on the horizon while keeping our feet rooted in our history. Your support built the 36-year foundation on which we stand and it's how we'll face the next chapter of connecting people with the lands we protect.

Thank you for continuing to be a part of this enduring mission,

Jamie Jo Horton | Executive Director  
Middlebury Area Land Trust