

# CINNABAR FOUNDATION

## Media Release

### **Cinnabar Foundation Announces 2011 Grants**

*Montana's Conservation Fund Features Climate Challenge Projects*

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WHITEFISH - A small Montana school district, a renewable energy association, and a grassroots conservation and family agriculture group are among 86 non-profit organizations named today to receive grants from the Cinnabar Foundation, Montana's Conservation Fund. This marks the 26<sup>th</sup> year that the private grant-making charity has invested earnings from its permanent fund back into conservation of Montana's natural and human environment.

The Foundation also named long-time Swan Valley naturalists, educators and community conservation leaders, Melanie and Tom Parker, as recipients of the 2011 Len and Sandy Sargent Stewardship Award. The annual award, established in honor of two of Cinnabar's co-founders, honors outstanding achievement in environmental advocacy, preservation, and education within Montana and the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Seventy-one of the Foundation's 2011 competitive grants were awarded under Cinnabar's Climate Challenge, which supports projects to promote renewable energy and sustainable communities, reduce greenhouse gas pollution, strengthen adaptation strategies for human and natural systems, and expand education and public outreach related to climate change.

"Human-induced climate change already is happening, but it is not too late to rein in the worst of the anticipated impacts," said Executive Director Steve Thompson. "Scientists tell us Montana will likely experience more intense drought, heat waves, and extreme weather events causing floods and forest fires. Fortunately, the response to our 2011 Climate Challenge demonstrates that Montana is producing a bonanza of good ideas and practical solutions to make a difference."

The Cinnabar Foundation was conceived in 1983 by several Montana conservation leaders swapping stories and dreams around the campfire at a remote elk hunting camp in the Cinnabar Basin. Perched above the northern boundary of Yellowstone National Park, Cinnabar Creek delivers pristine spring waters and melting snowfields to the Yellowstone River, running wild and free through the heart of Montana.

Like the headwater tributary of its name, the Cinnabar Foundation nourishes the lifeblood of this great state by supporting conservation of clean and abundant water, free-roaming wildlife, open lands, sustainable communities, and recreational access to the great outdoors. Since 1985, the foundation has awarded 1,300 grants and nearly \$6 million to non-profit groups, land trusts, and schools across Montana and portions of Wyoming and Idaho.

*Editors: Please find attached:*

- *Montana Stories, Montana Voices: Three featured grantees are making a positive difference for Montana's future today, including Montana Renewable Energy Association, Townsend School District, and the Northern Plains Resource Council.*
- *Len and Sandy Sargent Stewardship Award: Melanie and Tom Parker, Swan Valley, Montana*

A full list of 2011 grantees can be found at [www.thecinnabarfoundation.org](http://www.thecinnabarfoundation.org). Photos are available upon request.

# Montana Stories, Montana Voices

## Featured Projects Funded by the Cinnabar Foundation in 2011

### Townsend School District

#### Project: School Solar Panels, Energy Conservation, and Energy Education

**Summary:** Townsend School District leaders recognize the ethical and environmental obligations to educate students about alternative energy and energy conservation, and believe that the school needs to lead by example. Townsend schools have installed a biomass boiler, a solar panel system, and a wind turbine. A community



recycling program has been established at the school. This project will expand renewable energy and conservation programs and integrate energy conservation into the school curriculum.

**Quote:** *“When it comes to student education, the cost and source of energy will be one of the biggest issues vital to their future. Our solar project is helping to save the environment, show fiscal responsibility by reducing school electric costs, and is a valuable real life educational tool for our students, staff and community. Money*

*saved on energy also means more money for the classroom.”* Brian Patrick, Superintendent of Townsend Schools

Townsend 5th graders work on solar panels. Photo: Allison Bakken

### Montana Renewable Energy Association

#### Project: Demonstrating the Economic Benefits of Renewable Energy

**Summary:** To help avoid the worst impacts of climate change, Montana must reduce its dependence on fossil fuels. Fortunately, Montana is blessed with abundant renewable energy resources. Representing dozens of Montana businesses and hundreds of employees, MREA works to help Montanans and policymakers understand the multiple economic benefits of small-scale renewable energy in communities. Cinnabar funding will help MREA quantify and communicate these economic benefits in 2011.



Photo: Independent Power Systems

**Quote:** *“Small-scale renewable energy is my personal passion, but it’s also a career for me and hundreds of other Montanans. I’m a member of the Montana Renewable Energy Association because when renewable energy supporters come together, the whole state benefits. The renewable energy industry faced unprecedented attacks during the 2011 legislative session, but MREA and our allies successfully fought them off by showing how local renewable energy bolsters Montana’s energy security, protects our natural environment, and creates good jobs throughout the state.”* MREA President Conor Darby, Manager of Independent Power Systems, Bozeman

### Northern Plains Resource Council

#### Project: Preserving Family Agriculture and Conserving Clean Water

**Summary:** This Billings-based organization has built a grassroots Montana network of rural community organizations, **family** farmers and ranchers, and engaged citizens. Northern Plains seeks a transition from the nation’s reliance on coal, advocating increased energy efficiency and use of renewables. Northern Plains is leading efforts to block export of Montana coal to China, protect the rights of landowners impacted by coal development, and prevent damage to Montana’s precious water resources.



Three generations of Aldersons: Jeanie, Irv & Gerrit on their Tongue River Valley ranch

**Quote:** *“The lifeblood of our region’s economy and way of life is family agriculture. We are working for a future in which people, water, land, and wildlife are valued more than a one-time ‘harvest’ of coal.”* Jeanie Alderson, Tongue River Valley rancher and Northern Plains citizen leader

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MONTANA'S CONSERVATION FUND

## 2011 Len and Sandy Sargent Stewardship Award: Melanie and Tom Parker

Melanie and Tom Parker are teachers, guides, and advocates for rural Montana. Through Northwest Connections and the University of Montana, they have mentored more than 700 young adults to discover and appreciate rural ecology and livelihoods in western Montana. Their eloquent leadership and intimate knowledge of the forests, waters and wildlife have been integral to the Montana Legacy Project, which will forever conserve 310,000 acres of private forest at risk of conversion for real estate development.

The Parkers follow in the footsteps of their own mentor and neighbor, Bud Moore, a forestry pioneer, woodsman, and a towering giant of Montana conservation, who passed away last November at the age of 93. In Moore's epic 1996 book about land ethics in the Bitterroot Mountains, he credits his old friend and Montana writer, Norman Maclean, for inspiration. In turn, university students inspired by the Parkers now lead outdoor education and ecology programs around the United States.

The stewardship award from the Cinnabar Foundation, which includes a \$5,000 grant to Northwest Connections, honors the legacy of place-based conservation that the Parkers inherited from Bud Moore. "Melanie and Tom Parker step firmly into Montana's rich tradition of citizen conservation leadership. They have found ways to bring together diverse interests and craft innovative solutions that benefit both people and land," said Cinnabar Foundation President, Robin Tawney Nichols. "They find ways to integrate science, community, and education in the conservation of rural landscapes."

In cooperation with the Swan Ecosystem Center and other local partners, Northwest Connections is pursuing a bold new vision for community conservation and rural economic development. The Swan Valley Innovations project will establish a sustainable business campus near the town of Condon. Local residents and visiting university students will operate the integrated businesses, including: a log sort yard, a value-added sawmill and manufacturing shop for doors, framing, and flooring, and a wood pellet mill for local schools and homes. The partnership also plans to establish greenhouses and a small farm, a community center and education facilities with space for small business incubation. The campus will be fueled by an integrated heat and power co-generation plant utilizing wood waste materials.

Melanie is Executive Director of Northwest Connections. She has taught field-based ecology courses for 20 years, and is a vocal advocate for place-based collaborative conservation. Melanie facilitates the Swan Valley Coordinating Committee, and she is the current chair of the Swan Valley Elementary School Board of Trustees.

Tom has been an outfitter and hunting guide in the Swan Valley and surrounding wilderness areas for 33 years. His intimate knowledge of the Swan Valley landscape and its ecology has garnered widespread respect. As Northwest Connection's Conservation Specialist, Tom's passion for nature is contagious.



Tom, Kyra, Melanie & John Parker



Melanie discusses place-based conservation with Gov. Brian Schweitzer, Sen. Max Baucus, and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack in Ovando, 2010

Photos available upon request

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