

Conservation Served with a Twist (Poster)

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Montanan's value wildlife both as useful resources and as part of their community's extended social network. They also believe wildlife management should be controlled locally, and economies should not suffer from environmental protections (Manfredo 2018). These values knit with Kootenai valley resident's views regarding Cabinet-Yaak grizzly bear recovery (Canepa 2008) and define common threads of conflict between residents and recovery managers. Home attractants are a main recurring conflict. During Fall in areas like the Kootenai valley, the probability of a male bear being located on a property with fruit trees is >80% (Merkle 2013), and the removal of backyard fruit is the single most effective conflict mitigation tool available to residents (Annis, pers. comm. 2022, Crevier 2021). Pink Bench Distilling will create a market solution that unites local values with the conservation needs of grizzly bears by creating a fruit gleaning program to incentivize and facilitate fruit harvest, crafting fruit brandies for commercial distribution and giving back to the community and conservation through multiple profit-sharing mechanisms. In addition to bears, the Cabinet-Yaak also hosts over 35 plants that can be used in gin and liqueur production, many of which are already harvested commercially without conservation coordination. In further pursuit of uniting local values with conservation needs, we have created a botanical harvest program with the Forest Service that defines parameters for sustainable harvest of our wild-sourced ingredients; the first of its kind in Montana. We seek peer feedback on further best practices for our fruit gleaning and wild harvest programs.