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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## House of Sky Trail to Open on Mount Dean Stone, Run Wild Missoula Supports Effort with \$100k Gift

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**Missoula, Mont. May 20, 2022** - Five Valleys Land Trust (Five Valleys), Run Wild Missoula, MTB Missoula, City of Missoula Parks & Recreation, Montana Trail Crew and members of the Mount Dean Stone Committee look forward to ringing in the summer season with the grand opening of the House of Sky Trail on Mount Dean Stone on Saturday, June 4<sup>th</sup> in celebration of National Trails Day.

Founding Mount Dean Stone Committee Member Run Wild Missoula, recently pledged \$100,000 to Five Valleys Land Trust to support the next steps on the Dean Stone landscape including finishing the construction of the House of Sky Trail.

“We couldn’t be more excited to partner with Five Valleys Land Trust on the Mount Dean Stone project,” said Trisha Drobeck, Run Wild Missoula’s Executive Director. “It’s hard to imagine what life in Missoula would be like without landscapes like Mount Jumbo, Mount Sentinel, and the North Hills, and Mount Dean Stone represents the next phase of what makes Missoula the best place to run, walk, and hike. I know that our membership is dedicated to conserving Missoula’s open space legacy, and we all look forward to enjoying this landscape for generations to come.”

The new 4.6-mile trail runs along the Mount Dean Stone ridgeline from where it connects to the Mount Dean Stone Preserve Trail beneath the summit to Skyline Ridge in the West Fork of Deer Creek. The trail, which runs through land owned by The Nature Conservancy and the Montana DRNC, will offer a new place for the growing Missoula community to connect with nature while reducing pressure on existing open lands. The route provides incredible views of the surrounding valleys and a backcountry feel just minutes from downtown Missoula.

“Run Wild’s partnership with Five Valleys over the past several years has been critical in bringing 360 acres and just over of 5 miles of trails on the Mount Dean Stone Preserve into the public sphere,” says Whitney Schwab, Five Valleys Executive Director. “Run Wild’s dedication over the past decade and tireless work to promote healthy lifestyles and an inclusive approach to community open spaces is unmatched.”

Hands-on volunteer work will start at 9:00am on Saturday, June 4<sup>th</sup> at the Skyline Ridge trailhead. Volunteers will be hand-finishing trail, building fence, and completing other necessary work prior to



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opening the trail. At 1:00pm the group will celebrate the trail's grand opening with food and beverages donated by Big Sky Brewing Company. Community members interested in volunteering for the workday can learn more and register by visiting [fvlt.org](http://fvlt.org).

Five Valleys oversaw construction of the House of Sky Trail in 2021, which was designed by MTB Missoula and built with the help of many volunteers. The project was funded by a \$75,000 Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Recreational Trails Program grant in 2021, as well as contributions from the Missoula business community including OnX, Sapphire Physical Therapy, Zilla State, Endurance Physio.

"This is a project that has been in the works for about two years, and we're really excited to be able to share it with the public," says Five Valleys Associate Director, Ben Horan. "This has really been a community effort, with strong partnership from the Mount Dean Stone Committee, trail building expertise from MTB Missoula, and essential support from Run Wild Missoula, onX Maps, and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks' Recreational Trails Program."

Once open to the public, the House of Sky Trail will create a nearly 20-mile network of trail through connecting five trailheads on Mount Dean Stone: Barmeyer, Sousa, Inez Creek, Little Park Creek and Skyline Ridge.

Since 2016, Five Valleys has worked with over a dozen Mount Dean Stone landowners to protect and move 580 acres on the north face of Mount Dean Stone into City of Missoula ownership, including the 360-acre Mount Dean Stone Preserve and Trail which was transferred to the City in December 2020.

The larger Mount Dean Stone project has been made possible by generous community support and the collaboration of over 20 partnering organizations and businesses that make up the Mount Dean Stone Committee. Led by Five Valleys, the Committee is helping to guide the Mount Dean Stone project, which aims to serve as the future model of conservation to sustainably maintain public access for humans on the landscape.

"Opening the House of Sky Trail is the next step in ensuring a community outcome on Mount Dean Stone," says Schwab. "In opening this trail we are delighted to share this investment in the protection of public access to community open spaces, wide open vistas, and wildlife habitat close to town."

Learn more about the Mount Dean Stone project at [fvlt.org/projects/mount-dean-stone](http://fvlt.org/projects/mount-dean-stone).

#### **About Five Valleys Land Trust:**

*Founded in 1972, Five Valleys Land Trust is a nationally accredited nonprofit organization governed by a volunteer board of directors and based in Missoula, Montana. Five Valley's mission is to protect for future generations western Montana's natural legacy—our river corridors, wildlife habitat, agricultural lands, and community open spaces. In 2022 Five Valleys Land Trust is celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a community conservation organization. To date, their work has resulted in the preservation of nearly 100,000 acres across western Montana. For more information call 406.549.0755 or visit [fvlt.org](http://fvlt.org)*

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**About Run Wild Missoula:**

*Run Wild Missoula promotes and supports running and walking for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. RWM offers races, group runs, social activities, training classes, volunteer opportunities, and more. With 1,600 members, creating an inclusive community and giving back in meaningful ways are just some of our core values.*

*For more information call (406) 544-7073 or visit [runwildmissoula.org](http://runwildmissoula.org).*

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