

LEN & SANDY SARGENT STEWARDSHIP RECIPIENT

2011

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.

Melanie and Tom Parker step firmly into Montana's rich tradition of citizen conservation leadership. 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 green houses 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 and Tom's recognition for outstanding environmental achievement included a \$5,000 Special Award grant to Northwest Connections.



L to R: Tom, Kyra, Melanie and John Parker