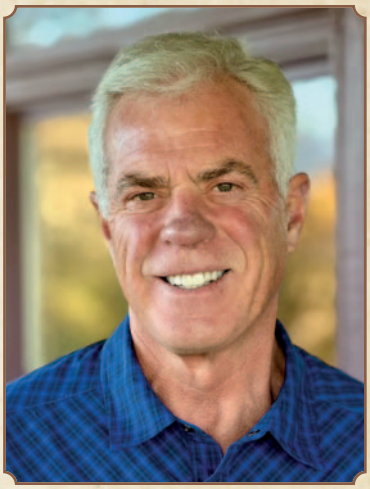

2025 INDUCTEE

SEAN GERRITY

1958–

Although Sean Gerrity had no formal background in conservation, he became a key player in preserving a northern Montana prairie ecosystem.

When Sean was growing up in Great Falls during the 1960s, his parents ensured that he spent most of his time outdoors where he developed a love of Montana's open spaces. His parents were self-taught naturalists who took the family camping nearly every good-weather weekend, the more remote the location, the better.

After Sean graduated from Montana State University in 1983, he and his girlfriend, Kayla, left for six months of travel in Southeast Asia, then a try at starting a business in Seattle. They later landed in Santa Cruz, Calif., where they co-founded a successful management consultant group—Catalyst Consulting—with another partner. The two decades Sean spent in that business were fruitful as far as learning how to create and manage successful enterprises, but he and his wife always planned to raise their family in Montana. In 1996, they moved back to Bozeman. They've now been married 45 years.

In 2001, a biologist friend described a grand plan to preserve a region of the Northern Great Plains—a plan which had been around for more than 100 years. A group of conservationists, including Curt Freese, had settled on northcentral Montana because of its mostly unplowed grasslands and the historic diversity and spectacular abundance of wildlife. Gerrity was initially skeptical of the plan, but after six months of deliberation and learning more details, he signed on. That's when he told Freese the plan should be approached differently: using a more entrepreneurial approach by creating a small group from scratch. Thus American Prairie Reserve was born.

Two years after he became CEO, Gerrity's team bought American Prairie's first piece of property—21,500 acres just north of the Charles M. Russell Wildlife Refuge—before they had raised enough money to fully pay for it.

"Sean has a Silicon Valley perspective on risk-taking. His strategy is to put himself way out on a limb and then work like hell not to cut it off," Freese said in 2014. "No one is thinking bigger than we are," Gerrity said at the time.

Today, American Prairie stewards more than a half-million acres adjacent to or near the 1.1 million-acre Charles M. Russell Wildlife Refuge and the 377,000-acre Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument. The still-growing mix of public and private land is open to the public for a variety of recreation activities, restoring and preserving for all one of the last intact temperate grasslands anywhere in the world.

Under Gerrity's leadership, American Prairie reintroduced bison. The growing herd now numbers around 1,000. Meanwhile, more than 550 bison have been sent to various tribes and to other private conservation herds around the country. They've also collaborated with neighboring ranchers through the Wild Sky program and with tribal neighbors, expanding American Prairie's conservation impact beyond its boundaries.

In 2018, Sean retired from American Prairie. He continues his conservation work with the recently published book *Wild On Purpose* and a podcast called *The Answers Are Out There*, where he interviews innovators who are helping improve and restore nature, biodiversity, and wildlife around the world.