

COLORADO OPEN LANDSCAPES

A NEWSLETTER OF COLORADO OPEN LANDS



Orchard Ranch located on the South Platte River near Jackson Reservoir

South Platte Farmers Plant the Seed for Alternatives to Buy-and-Dry

Water scarcity is one of the greatest dilemmas facing Colorado today. Our population is projected to double by 2050—but water supplies in our arid state remain finite. Nearly two thirds of the water that originates in Colorado is obligated to other neighboring and downstream states through interstate compacts. Confined, non-renewable aquifers are being exhausted at an alarming rate, and experts are divided in their opinions about the long-term effects of climate change on precipitation and water availability.

Spurred to action by water shortages following the 2002 drought, the Colorado legislature enacted the “Colorado Water for the 21st Century Act” in 2005. This law established a collaborative, locally driven framework to address Colorado’s impending water supply challenges by creating nine basin roundtables. These roundtables represent each of the state’s eight major river basins and the Denver metropolitan area.

Each basin roundtable is comprised of local citizens representing a wide variety of interests. They have been tasked with quantifying water needs, analyzing existing supplies, and identifying projects and methods to achieve water supply sustainability into the future. The roundtables’ findings were recently compiled into the Statewide Water Supply Initiative 2010 Report, and the conclusions are frightening. For example, as Colorado’s water needs nearly double by 2050, hundreds of thousands of acres of irrigated agricultural land may be dried up to meet that need.

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Welcoming Amanda Nims
Meet our new Land Protection Specialist!

Stewardship Corner
Working to improve habitat for the whimsical Spotted Sandpiper.

Summer 2011
Volume 12, Number 1



There are only three ways to meet the [water] needs of this population growth: new water supply development, conservation, and agriculture transfers. —Jim Yahn

Jim Yahn, Chair of the South Platte Basin Roundtable, on his ranch near Sterling.

Agriculture in the Crosshairs

Jim Yahn is a part-time farmer and rancher, the manager of two irrigation reservoir companies, and the Chair of the South Platte Basin roundtable. To him, the writing is on the wall, *The majority of Colorado's population growth in the next forty years is going to take place within the South Platte Basin along the Front Range. There are only three ways to meet the needs of this population growth: new water supply development, conservation, and agriculture transfers. Agriculture in the South Platte Basin has been and will continue to be the low-hanging fruit.*

More than 80% of Colorado's surface water is diverted for agricultural purposes, supporting a \$5.5 billion a year industry. An acre of irrigated agriculture produces four to five times the amount of economic activity as an acre of dryland agriculture through both direct crop sales, as well as ancillary economic activity such as labor and supplies.

The Colorado Water Conservation Board estimates that within the South Platte Basin, the transfer of water from agriculture to municipal and industrial uses (sometimes called "buy and dry") could dewater up to 267,000 acres of irrigated land by 2050, or 32% of the currently irrigated acreage, the most of any basin in the State. With 3 out of Colorado's 5 most productive agricultural counties located along the South Platte River, it is believed that this would lead to a decrease in farm-related revenue by up to \$1.5 billion annually, potentially crippling rural communities reliant upon economic activity derived from irrigated crop production.

A New Crop

Colorado Open Lands has worked for decades to secure agricultural water rights using conservation easements. Out of the 254 conservation easements we hold, 84 restrict agricultural water rights to the land in perpetuity to ensure that the water will continue to be available for agricultural production in the future. Keeping water rights on the land not only has the potential to sustain agriculture, but maintaining historical irrigation patterns can also benefit wildlife, wetlands, and other water users.

In many parts of the state, water is often times more valuable to sell for conversion to municipal or industrial uses than for agricultural production. It is perfectly reasonable for a farmer or rancher, given the long-term uncertainty associated with agricultural production, to seek the greatest and most immediate financial benefit from this asset. However, for many agricultural producers, other considerations factor into the decision making process, such as the desire to pass a profitable farm or ranch onto the next generation, or loyalty to the rural lifestyle.

More and more farmers and ranchers are restricting a portion of their water rights using conservation easements, while retaining flexibility to sell or lease a portion of their water to other users. It is also becoming common to draft conservation easements to allow the farmer to lease the water off the property in some limited fashion, most commonly three out of every ten years.

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I NEVER MET JIM AYER. Dieter in our office said he was a hell of a guy. Rancher, entrepreneur, visionary. He passed away in November in a hunting accident. His wife, Susan, said she would continue with the donation of a conservation easement on their Delta County ranch, because it meant a lot to Jim.

Last week I read the obituary for another Jim—Jim Benedict, a renowned geologist and archaeologist. Jim and his wife Audrey were two of the first people I met when I came to Colorado 35 years ago. They had just completed a donation to The Nature Conservancy of land they owned and loved inside the Indian Peaks Wilderness Area. Jim's enthusiasm over the gift was unrestrained. He had an infectious, life-long passion for the high-alpine environment and its conservation, and he was fulfilling his passion.

The last year has seemed particularly hard in the land conservation community, in part because of the many good people we lost. Joy Hilliard, another of my early introductions in Colorado, was an inspiration. The depth and breadth of her support of conservation was unsurpassed. Whether it was in the boardroom of the many organizations she served, accepting the many awards she received, or most fittingly, on the peaks she climbed and the rivers she fished, Joy walked her talk and lived the life of a conservationist.

For many years I worked with Bud Simon, a planner at DHM in Denver, and a fellow board member of the Mountain Area Land Trust. A tireless worker, the more challenging things became, the harder he'd work and the more corny quips he'd produce. Bud was instrumental in MALT's successes in protecting Noble Meadow and the Beaver Brook Watershed, among many others. Bud helped Colorado Open Lands with projects from Gunnison to Pueblo to Jefferson County. And Mike Strunk as well. A former Park Service planner, a marvelous nature photographer and MALT staffer, Mike and Bud were best friends. Both are gone too soon, but not before they left their mark.

And, of course, Chips Barry. With a natural resources background and a disarming sense of humor, Chips brought no less than a new way of viewing the world to the Denver Water Board and the water community in general. Seeking partnerships and consensus, Chips preached and practiced treating water not as a commodity, but as a limited resource to be managed and conserved. Chip's accidental passing a month before his retirement left the conservation community stunned, but his lifetime achievements left us forever changed for the better.

They all believed in the land, and they all believed in conservation. They each contributed in their own way. They protected their land, they worked for the cause, they contributed money, they changed policy. Perhaps that's the biggest take-away—there's so many ways to make a difference.

I began my career in Illinois. I had several mentors. One was Bob Betz, a university professor with a passion for native prairies. While 99% of Illinois' rich native prairies had been plowed under as prized farmland, Bob discovered that some of the finest remnants of the prairies were located on the unused portions of the original settler cemeteries. On weekends, Bob would travel the state arranging to meet with different rural cemetery boards, extolling them with the virtues of these unique prairie remnants in their care, and urging the boards to protect them.

In many cases, however, Bob's unbridled enthusiasm came across as a little strange to the reserved members of these rural cemetery boards. To many, he was a weird college professor from Chicago telling them they should burn, not mow, their cemetery. So Bob left.

When he returned he was Director of The Prairie Preservation Society, a Chicago-based conservation organization. He even had business cards. This time the cemetery boards took him seriously, and listened to his recommendations. They didn't know the number of members in The Prairie Preservation Society never exceeded one. When Bob passed away in 2007, Chicago Wilderness Magazine called him "Mr. Prairie." Among his accomplishments was the preservation of 44 cemetery prairies.

There are many ways to make a difference. Bob Betz did. So did Jim and Jim, and Joy and Chips, and Mike and Bud. They're gone too soon, but they've left us with a legacy, and an example.

**They all believed in the land,
and they all believed in
conservation. They each
contributed in their own way.**

Daniel E. Pike, President



Irrigated farms along the South Platte River near Brush

Clearly, some farmers and ranchers are beginning to view their water rights as another “crop” that can be accessed to generate new revenue to support their agricultural operation. They wish to maintain control of their water rights, and pursue alternatives to buy and dry sales that permanently export water out of the community. Many believe that a transition to a water leasing paradigm could allow Colorado to meet our future water needs while maintaining a vibrant agricultural industry, a compromise that may benefit rural and urban communities alike.

A Water Cooperative?

In the lowest reaches of the South Platte Basin in Colorado, where Jim Yahn lives, the recent purchase of farms by upstream municipalities and water speculators, coupled with a concern for the future of Colorado’s agriculture, has prompted local producers and agricultural water providers to seek home-grown alternatives to buy and dry.

Joe Frank, manager of the Lower South Platte Water Conservancy District and a member of the South Platte Basin roundtable, observes, *there are multiple water providers, brokers and speculators buying up water rights in the Lower River with the intent to dry up irrigated lands and transfer the water historically consumed by crops to municipal and industrial uses. Several agriculture water users are now looking to possibly join together and lease some of their water to address both agriculture and municipal/ industrial shortages as an alternative to selling their land and water.*

Frank, Yahn, and other agricultural community leaders are pursuing the formation of the “Lower South Platte Water Cooperative” an idea which was first envisioned by Mike Groves, a farmer in Morgan County. If successful, the “voluntary membership” organization could create a mechanism for leasing and exchanging water from users with available supplies to users who need supplies. The formation of this cooperative builds upon the recommendations of a recent study conducted by the Colorado Cornrowers Association with the support of the Colorado Water Conservation Board. That study indicated the potential for exchanging, leasing and retiming available water in the Lower South Platte River to meet a portion of the Basin’s projected agricultural and municipal/industrial water needs.

In addition, feedback from multiple local water users made it clear that the success of a Water Cooperative will be directly related to two key issues: 1) The organizational structure chosen to govern and operate the Water Cooperative must be fair, open and transparent, and 2) The operational plan for the Water Cooperative must be able to function within the

existing system of water right decrees, and be done so that no injury to existing water rights occurs.

In the short-term, the role of the Lower South Platte Water Cooperative could be to serve as a locally driven organization for leasing excess augmentation water developed and owned by local farmers to other farmers who are periodically water short or as a more permanent supply for municipal/ industrial water users. Excess augmentation water accrues to the stream periodically through the normal operations of replacing groundwater well pumping. The first steps would be to develop a transparent operational plan for the Water Cooperative and to work through the physical and administrative constraints of exchanging and moving water up and down stream.

Longer term, some of the 29 water use associations that have shown initial support of the Water Cooperative concept have indicated potential interest in leasing water derived from alternative water transfers such as rotational fallowing and dry-year leases of senior direct flow and reservoir water rights. These types of leases could possibly support uses as far up stream as the Denver metropolitan area, potentially meeting some long-term municipal and industrial water needs in the South Platte Basin.

A Role for Land Trusts

Conservation easements could play an integral role in these arrangements by protecting productive farmland while ensuring that the water resource cannot be permanently removed from agricultural production. Farmers and ranchers can benefit from the state and federal tax incentive programs to supplement their agricultural income. Municipal and industrial water users seek the security that the water they are relying upon will not be stripped from the land and sold to another user in the future.

Recent grants from the Colorado Water Conservation Board will support the feasibility and analysis of the Water Cooperative over the next year and a half. Colorado Open Lands has been invited to serve on the technical support team, and we are excited to participate in this innovative local strategy that has the potential to address some of the existing and future urban and rural water needs and pressures. While the Water Cooperative has generated a great deal of positive support in the South Platte Basin, Jim Yahn puts things in perspective; *We aren’t doing this to get a pat on the back. I want my kids and kids of other farmers to have the same opportunity to live a rural lifestyle, to farm if they want. If we don’t come up with some alternatives, they may not have that option.* ■

Tarrying on the Tarryall

In the Fall 2009 issue of Colorado Open Landscapes, we celebrated the protection of Tarryall Creek Ranch in South Park. A longtime conservation priority, the 4,400-acre Ranch affords tremendous views of the Continental Divide from U.S. Highway 285 and contains more than four miles of Tarryall Creek, including hundreds of acres of willow shrublands and several globally rare wetland communities.

A unique partnership between Great Outdoors Colorado, the Park County Land and Water Trust Fund, Beartooth Capital Partners, and Colorado Open Lands ensured that the property is conserved in perpetuity. At that time, it was hard to imagine a more successful project outcome.

Fast forward to December 2010, when Park County purchased 1,640 acres of the Tarryall Creek Ranch as a *South Park National Heritage Area* landmark and public recreation area. This acquisition will preserve the historic ranch headquarters, provide public access to more than two and a half miles of high quality trout stream, and maintain agricultural use of fertile meadowland.

The Colorado Division of Wildlife provided \$2.14 million for a public recreation easement, and Park County contributed \$500,000 from its Land and Water Trust Fund to secure certain improvement and use rights. Colorado Open Lands provided grant writing and technical assistance at several key junctures during the 15-month process.

A 2009 Division of Wildlife fish survey indicates that this section of Tarryall Creek contains up to 1,980 trout per mile, with many between 10 and 14 inches in length. Previously managed as one of eight ranch leases available through the South Park Fly Fishers Program, free fishing access will be limited to a few anglers per day to maintain this high quality resource and experience. An operations plan is currently being



Tarryall Creek Ranch in South Park

jointly developed by the CDOW and Park County to allow other uses such as hunting, hiking, wildlife viewing, resource education, and equestrian trails.

In 2008, Park County and the Division of Wildlife pooled their funds to purchase a separate (200-acre) portion of Tarryall Creek Ranch for a public shooting range. The combination of these two different properties provide exciting new public recreation opportunities in the South Park National Heritage Area (NHA)!

Designated by Congress, South Park is now one of about 50 NHAs in the United States defined as nationally distinctive landscapes shaped by natural, historic and recreational resources. *For more information about the Tarryall Creek Ranch project, contact Gary Nichols at the Park County Tourism & Community Development Office (gnichols@parkco.us).*

Colorado Open Lands Loses a Friend

In November, lifetime Crawford resident and conservation easement donor, James J. “Jim” Ayer, passed away as a result of a hunting accident.

James Judson Ayer was born to Burtis Bennett and Mary E. (Stewart) Ayer on November 26, 1941 at the Ayer Ranch in Crawford. He attended schools and spent his childhood in Crawford. Jim graduated from Crawford High School with the class of 1960 and furthered his education at an electronics school in Denver; Mesa State College in Grand Junction; and Western State College in Gunnison.

Jim was drafted to military service in the Army in October 1966 and served until October 1968. He was assigned to the Headquarters Battery of the 2nd Battalion of the 18th Artillery Regiment in Rothwesten, Germany and was discharged as a Specialist E4 with a security clearance.

On August 25, 1971, Jim married Susan Albright at the



Ayer Ranch near Crawford

Hotchkiss Baptist Church. The couple had the honor of sharing over 39 years of marriage together.

Jim volunteered for numerous organizations throughout his community including the American Legion Post # 190; National Cattleman’s Association; Colorado Cattleman’s Association; Delta County Livestock; Friends of Crawford Town Hall; and the Hotchkiss Elks Lodge # 1807.

The Ayer Ranch is a founding member of Colorado Homestead Meats. In addition, Jim was president of the Black Mesa Livestock Association, and the Saddle Mountain and Daisy Ditch Companies. He was on the board of the Cathedral Water Company, and the Virginia, Stewart, and Dyer Fork Ditch Companies. Jim was also a member of the NRA.

We at Colorado Open Lands extend our deepest sympathies to Jim’s family and friends. He will be missed.

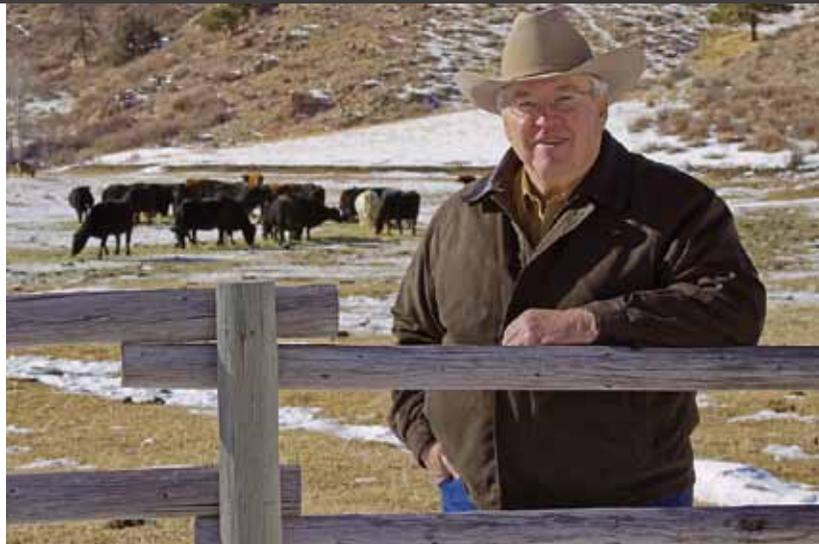
A native of Colorado, with a lifelong involvement in farm and ranch ownership, operations, and management, it's no wonder that Wes Segelke cares deeply about Colorado's open spaces and agricultural sustainability.

It was his 30-year friendship with Colorado Open Lands' Board member Bill Vollbracht (see Board Spotlight, Spring 2010) that made the fortuitous and logical connection between Wes and Colorado Open Lands. Wes joined our Board in 2004 and has provided an invaluable source of experience and perspective since then. Not only does Wes bring a personal perspective on the agricultural industry to our Board, but four decades of experience running his own real estate investment company.

When we asked why land conservation is important to him, his reply was direct and comprehensive: *America has significant areas of open space in its public lands, wilderness areas and national parks, but I don't think we have enough protected areas that preserve family-run agricultural operations. And when we preserve these private properties, we must acknowledge that we are able to do so because of the private landowners' foresightedness and generosity.*

When he's not advocating for land conservation or tending to his ranch operations in Northern Colorado near Red Feather Lakes, Wes is serving on numerous other boards, including the National Western Stock Show Association and the Roundup Riders of the Rockies Heritage and Trails Foundation. He also served on the Colorado State Board of Agriculture (Colorado State University Board of Governors), and was a participant in the People to People Agricultural Delegation to the Soviet Union in 1982.

Looking forward, Wes believes that land conservation will need to focus increasingly on the issue of stewardship. Subsequent owners may not have the long-term vision for



Wes Segelke

the property that the original conservation easement donor had. In addition, environmental changes, societal shifts, and the expectation that our nation will only see an increasing need for agriculturally-produced products will contribute to the challenges of preserving additional open space, or put new pressures on owners of already-protected lands.

Wes' wife's grandfather, John Carey, started ranching in Eagle in the early 1900s: *Today when you drive past Eagle, even though we know exactly where the ranch was, there is no evidence of it or agriculture anymore. I-70 goes right through the middle of the ranch, with commercial buildings on either side.* Needless to say, it's important to Wes to be part of the solution to his concerns about land conservation. Colorado Open Lands' growing emphasis on stewardship and resource enhancement is just one of our new organizational priorities Wes is excited about.

Colorado Conservationist Honored with National Wetlands Award

Congratulations to our partner in conservation, Rio de la Vista, who will be recognized this month with a National Wetlands Award in Conservation and Restoration.

Rio's enthusiasm, creativity, and commitment to bringing together broad-based partnerships has helped conserve more than 27,000 acres of wetlands, many on private lands, across the San Luis Valley in Colorado.

Ms. de la Vista works on a variety of projects for multiple organizations. Her contributions to the Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust (RiGHT) as the co-coordinator of the Rio Grande Initiative, have resulted in the protection of more than 19,000 acres and 33 miles of the Rio Grande, including ranchland, wildlife habitat, and senior surface water rights.

Ms. de la Vista has also brought together numerous partners for the Rock Creek Heritage Project, permanently



protecting 8,000 acres of private land, with nearly half of those lands buffering the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge. She has also been instrumental in securing millions of dollars of funding for further wetland protection, including a groundbreaking \$1.5 million grant from the Colorado Water Conservation Board.

The Rio Grande River and its wetlands offer significant wildlife habitat and essential groundwater recharge to the San Luis Valley's rapidly dwindling aquifer. There are approximately 200,000 acres of nationally and internationally important wetlands in

the San Luis Valley under private and public ownership and management. For more than a decade Ms. de la Vista has been their voice, as she is known for saying, *We need to keep the 'wet' in wetlands.*

Colorado is lucky to have such a wonderful leader working to protect and improve our state's precious wetlands!

If you didn't make it to the **Colorado Coalition of Land Trust's** annual conference on March 7th and 8th at the University of Denver, you missed a really great program. Over 220 folks who care about Colorado's spectacular landscape were there. Returning to greet all the conference participants was **John Swartout**, CCLT's former and current Executive Director who had taken a leave of absence of several months to work on a political campaign. **Rand Wentworth** from the **Land Trust Alliance** spoke and then held a 'listening' session to get Colorado's thoughts on LTA's future initiatives. Some of the pretty amazing handouts are available on the CCLT web site, www.cclt.org.

Where are they now—after their two-year **Colorado Conservation Trust** fellowship is over? **Mandy Bernard**, who was with the **Middle Park Land Trust**, has "gone the furthest." All the way to Homer, Alaska and the **Kachemak Land Trust!** Her title is Conservation Director. You can reach her at Mandy@KachemakLandTrust.org. Oh Mandy, you are in one of the world's most gorgeous places. Enjoy!

Others chose Colorado's own spectacular country. **Greg Yankee** liked being the Policy Director for the **Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts** so much, he stayed on. Those of us who fret about what kind of sausage the legislature makes are grateful to Greg for his skills. He can be reached at Greg.Yankee@cclt.org. **Zach Smith** also stayed local by remaining with the **Colorado Water Trust**. He can be reached at ZSmith@coloradowatertrust.org. **Josh Tennyson**, formerly with the **Palmer Land Trust**, has found a happy home as Program Coordinator, Open Space Land Acquisitions for **Great Outdoors Colorado**. **Jonah Adley** completed his fellowship with the **Trust for Public Land** and has set up his own statewide law practice (based in Boulder) specializing in business consulting, land use, and real estate. You can reach him at jonah@jadleylaw.com or at 303.483.3270. **Aaron Derwingson** liked the San Luis Valley so much that after his fellowship with the **Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust** (RiGHT) was over, he stayed on as Stewardship Director. He can be reached at aarond@riograndelandtrust.org. If you, or someone you know, think you might apply for one of these fabulous fellowships, CCT anticipates filling 3-4 fellowships this summer. Check out CCT's website, www.coloradoconservationtrust.org for more specific information. Applications should go to **Patrick Holmes** (pholmes@coct.org).

You could practically hear the relief in the 'voice' of the **Land Trust Alliance's** Western Program Manager, **Wendy Ninteman**, as she wrote to announce that **Shannon Meyer** has accepted the position of Western Conservation Manager for LTA. Based in Carbondale, Shannon will not only cover Colorado but New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and

Texas. Shannon has plenty of land trust experience, having worked for seven years at the Aspen Valley Land Trust and as a consultant. We welcome her aboard and wish we had her frequent flyer miles! You can reach Shannon at smeyer@lta.org or at 970.704.1313.

Good news for land trusts who have noxious weed problems (and which one of us doesn't nowadays)! One of our own is Colorado's new State Weed Coordinator. **Steve Ryder**, who most recently worked as Acting Director of the **Black Canyon Regional Land Trust**, can now be found at 303.239.4173 or at steve.ryder@ag.state.co.us. The good news is that Steve will understand our needs and difficulties that most others can't appreciate. Steve leaves the BCLT in the energetic hands of **Olivia Bartlett** who joined BCLT last June as Land Steward. Olivia's responsibilities include monitoring all 339 conservation easements held by the trust. Mercifully, the land trust had just been accredited by the Land Trust Alliance so the documents and files were all in order. While Olivia came most recently from New Hampshire, she knows the West, having served in the **Division of Wildlife** in the Craig area doing sage grouse research. You can congratulate Olivia at 970.252.1481 or olivia@blackcanyonlandtrust.org.

Welcome to two new CCLT board members: **Joseph C. Almon** CFA, a Financial Advisor with **Merrill Lynch** and **Kerri Rollins**, Open Space Manger for **Larimer County Open Lands Program**. While on CCLT's Board, Kerri will be the liaison to the **Colorado Open Space Alliance**, a statewide organization of publicly funded local and regional open space programs. But, wait a minute, wasn't **K-Lynn Cameron** Larimer County's Open Space Manager? Well, K-Lynn retired. But because she cares so much about conserving land in Larimer County, she's now helping the **Legacy Land Trust** with development. And K-Lynn's helping with development for LLT because **Jane Clark**, who founded LLT, retired after serving for 18 years in a variety of positions, most recently as Development Director. Jane said, *I will continue my generous support for Legacy Land Trust as it moves into the next phase of meaningful land conservation that will make a permanent mark on the local landscape.* Jane and K-Lynn are great examples of the wonderful people who make land conservation in Colorado a success.

The land conservation community got a little bigger last November. When **Kathleen Staks**, Program Manager for Open space at **Great Outdoors Colorado** and former CCT Fellow, left work on Friday, October 29th, she was feeling just fine awaiting the birth of her baby 'scheduled' for three weeks later. But baby Evelyn had other plans and arrived in the wee hours of the following Tuesday. There's a wonderful picture of Evelyn on the proud mother's cell phone which can be whipped out in a flash to any interested viewer.



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"Landscapes" is published by Colorado Open Lands,
274 Union Boulevard, Suite 320, Lakewood, CO 80228

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Editor: Cheryl Fox, Assistant Editor: C/A Russell Partners, Design: G-man Graphics

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Your support of Colorado Open Lands has helped to protect over 243,000 acres of Colorado's spectacular vistas and rich agricultural heritage. For every \$1,000 raised, Colorado Open Lands can protect \$10,000 worth of land.

Please join Colorado Open Lands in protecting Colorado's land and water legacy. You can support Colorado Open Lands in the following ways:

Donate Online: Your online gift will make a difference. With your support, we can continue to protect and preserve the great scenic lands and natural heritage of Colorado!!

Gifts of Cash or Securities: Colorado Open Lands accepts personal and corporate checks and gifts of stock. By giving appreciated stock, you can avoid capital gains taxes and receive an income tax deduction.

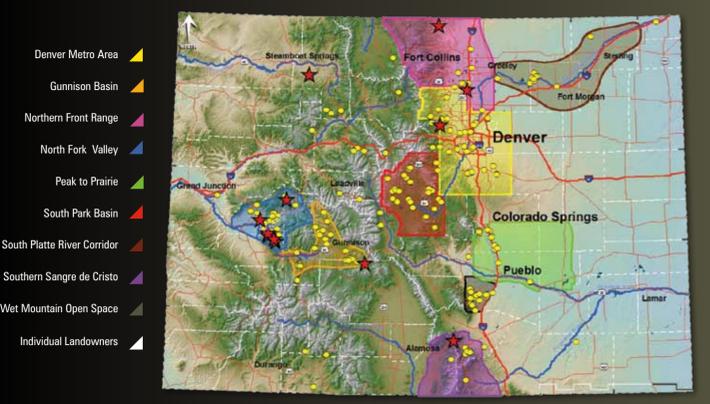
Community Shares: Founded in 1986, Community Shares is a nonprofit federation that raises funds for over 100 Colorado charities through workplace giving. Colorado Open Lands' Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) number is 78031. Our Denver Employee Combined Campaign (DECC) number is 5021, and our Community Shares of Colorado (CSC) number is 5016.

Employer Matching Gifts: Check with your employer to see if they will match your gift. This can often double your contribution.

Leave a Legacy: By including Colorado Open Lands in your will, you will leave a legacy of open space for generations to come—as well as receive potential tax benefits.

Gifts of Real Estate: Colorado Open Lands can take excess real estate and turn it into capital for protecting endangered land around Colorado, while potentially giving the donor significant tax deductions.

2010 Projects Completed



▲ Mirador Ranch, Jefferson and Gilpin counties

Denver-Metro Area

Protecting open space in a quickly growing urban area is always a challenge. To date, we have protected 11,202 acres through 40 projects in Denver and the surrounding six counties.

Mirador Ranch
Jefferson and Gilpin Counties, 200 acres
Partners: Mirador Ranch, LLC and the Nelson-Gruchy Family
Conservation Values: At the behest of its members, the Gruchy family, and the Council of Mirador Ranch (aka Mirador Ranch LLC), bestowed a second and final gift of 200 additional acres of Mirador Ranch in December 2010.

Nestled in the Front Range foothills of the Shires (Jefferson and Gilpin counties), far from Mordor and the omniscient eye of Sauron, lies a delightful little manor known locally as Mirador Ranch. Mirador's province spans nearly 400 acres just to the north of Golden Gate Canyon State Park. Dense conifer stands and aspen woodlands provide habitat for many antlered woodland creatures, the venerable black bear, and the occasional elf. Hobbits prefer the lush and expansive meadows where one might happen upon the fabled Mariposa Lily—a species regarded as vulnerable within the State and across Middle Earth. Many a traveler have been swooned by Mirador's radiant beauty as they gazed upon the land in search of their precious (or at least an unobstructed) view across the continental divide.

Gunnison Basin

This area contains some of Colorado's quintessentially beautiful mountain valleys, and Colorado Open Lands and its partners have proudly protected 14,039 acres of privately owned working ranches through 41 projects to date.

Cross Bar Ranch: Marshall Creek Parcel,
Saguache County, 643 acres
Partners: Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy, Great Outdoors Colorado, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service
Conservation Values: The Cross Bar Ranch is located on the west side of Monarch Pass and adjacent to the small town of Sargents. The Marshall Creek Parcel of the ranch is accessed by Marshall Pass Road, just south of Highway 50. This conservation easement, visible from both Highway



▲ Cross Bar Ranch, Saguache County

North Fork Valley

Bisected by the North Fork of the Gunnison River, this valley consists primarily of public land, with a mosaic of private lands in small scale agriculture. Watercourses from high mess cut through steep canyons and combine with numerous springs to provide lush vegetation and an unusually diverse biota for the high-desert environment. To date, we have protected 7180 acres through 41 projects.

Klaseen Dairy
Delta County, 167 acres
Partners: Pete and Sharron Klaseen, Conservation Assistance Program
Conservation Values: In partnership with landowner's Pete and Sharron Klaseen, as well as the Conservation Assistance Program, Colorado Open Lands acquired an easement on a 167-acre active dairy operation. Since 1958, the Klaseen family has owned and operated their class A dairy on the productive soils atop Delta County's Redlands Mesa. The characteristic black and white spotted cows, reminiscent of commercials

Colorado Open Lands worked with landowners to complete 21 conservation projects in 2010!

As always, we greatly appreciate the opportunity to help landowners achieve their dreams for their land. Please join us in congratulating all the landowners who took a big step forward in helping to protect Colorado's unique heritage last year!



▲ Highland Lake Farm, Weld County



▲ C Lazy Me Ranch, Larimer County

Ranch is on the west end of Fruitland Mesa, in an area interspersed with public and private lands. The Todd family runs a hay and cattle operation, irrigating native grasses and pasturing their cattle on their home ranch and nearby public lands. These same public lands, which provide habitat for numerous wildlife species, will now be forever buffered by protected private land.

Northern Front Range

Ironically, it is the counties with the richest agricultural soils that are experiencing the greatest growth pressures. To date, we have protected 2,924 acres through 19 projects in this rapidly developing part of Colorado.

Highland Lake Farm
Weld County, 92 acres
Partners: Michael & Kathryn Litzenberger, with funding from the USDA Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, the Town of Mead, Boulder County
Conservation Values: Colorado Open Lands was proud to work with the Litzenberger family on their second conservation easement. Their 92-acre farm in Weld County, Colorado has some of the most productive soil in the state and produces sugar beets, pinto beans, wheat, barley, hay – most of which is sold in Front Range communities. This project was made possible by a partnership with NRCS through the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, the Town of Mead, and Boulder County (even though the farm isn't in their county!). This working farm will now be protected in perpetuity and will help to preserve the agricultural character of the Town of Mead.

North Fork Valley
Bisected by the North Fork of the Gunnison River, this valley consists primarily of public land, with a mosaic of private lands in small scale agriculture. Watercourses from high mess cut through steep canyons and combine with numerous springs to provide lush vegetation and an unusually diverse biota for the high-desert environment. To date, we have protected 7180 acres through 41 projects.

Peak to Prairie

The vision of the Peak to Prairie project is to achieve landscape-scale conservation by knitting together a series of public and private protected lands to preserve one of the last remaining stretches of unfragmented prairie along Colorado's Front Range. This regional effort will benefit the local economy, preserve working ranches and critical habitats, and provide a critical link in the Colorado Front Range Trail. To date, we have protected 5,860 acres through 21 projects.

Todd Ranch Amended and Restated
Delta and Montrose Counties, 415 acres (\$25.4 total)
Partners: Danny and Monita Todd, Conservation Assistance Program
Conservation Values: Danny and Monita Todd's working ranch straddles counties and generations. Years ago, Danny and Monita purchased their ranch from Monita's parents, Charles and Betty Klaseen, who also protected their ranch this year—what a family conservation ethic! The Todd



▲ The East Fork of the San Juan River, East Fork Ranch, Mineral County

South Park Basin

South Park is a 1,000-square mile grassland basin in the geographic center of Colorado that contains over 200 miles of stream and riparian habitat and a globally rare grassland community. Colorado Open Lands has protected a total of 26,648 acres, including nearly 30 miles of riparian stream corridor, through 48 projects to date in this landscape of state and national significance.

South Platte River Corridor
Encompassing a six-county area in the northeast part of the state, this area is comprised of a mosaic of cottonwood and willow forests, irrigated and dryland agricultural areas, and short-grass prairie. This area also supports an amazing abundance of migratory bird species. We have protected 10,184 acres through 20 projects to date.

Southern Sangre de Cristo
This area provides critical winter range for elk and deer, as well as year-round habitat for black bear, mountain lion, wild turkey, and other wildlife. Colorado Open Lands has protected 84,512 acres through 22 projects in the area.

Moore Mountain Ranch
Huerfano County, 250 acres
Partners: Dianne Lathrop Law and Deborah Ann Lathrop
Conservation Values: Moore Mountain Ranch was once part of the only pass from the San Luis Valley into the Front Range. A narrow gauge railroad used to bring produce from the valley to the hungry residents of Denver and Colorado Springs over what is now known as "Old La Veta Pass."

Wet Mountain Open Space Coalition
Through a landowner initiated effort, Colorado Open Lands has protected 15,204 acres through 40 conservation easements to date.

Individual Landowners

In addition to our Community Conservation Areas, Colorado Open Lands responds to more than 100 inquiries each year from landowners seeking information on conservation options for their land around Colorado. Working with 48 landowners, conservation easements have been placed on 63,357 acres across Colorado to date.

Wet Mountain Open Space Coalition
Through a landowner initiated effort, Colorado Open Lands has protected 15,204 acres through 40 conservation easements to date.



▲ R Bar None Ranch, Routt County

East Fork Ranch

Partners: The Conservation Fund and the McCarthy Family with funding from Great Outdoors Colorado and the Gates Family Foundation
Conservation Values: The East Fork Ranch is located in a secluded valley deep in the South San Juan National Forest east of Pagosa Springs. Entirely surrounded by public lands, the property is a large private in-holding containing more than four miles of the East Fork of the San Juan River. The area is extremely wild and rugged, and provides ideal habitat for a variety of sensitive wildlife species, including Canadian lynx. Furthermore, the East Fork Ranch provides stunning scenic views from several forest roads, and contains trailheads for two public trails.

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The Good Steward—Partnering to Restore Habitat

The Spotted Sandpiper is a whimsical shorebird, small in stature with distinctive black spots and a constantly bobbing tail. It is a migratory bird who breeds across the United States, wintering as far south as South America. It lives on the edges of freshwater ponds and creeks, and forages for a variety of insects, beetles, crickets and other small invertebrates. The females make their nests in a small depression in the ground, surrounded with grasses and moss where the chicks will be able to find ample food after birth.

Fourmile Creek and its surrounding ponds and wetlands outside of Fairplay is one of the important stopover refuges for the Sandpiper and other shorebirds and migrating waterfowl along their route. Lush riparian grasses, rushes, sedges, forbs and shrubs line the Creek providing protection, food and nesting material. Small ponds and wetlands along the Creek provide shallow muddy lagoons that attract the insects on which the Spotted Sandpiper feeds.

The Spotted Sandpiper's population benefits from having a wide range. However, its numbers have been decreasing in recent decades as their habitat has been lost, a result of increased human settlement and development. The natural riparian communities that provide habitat for a variety of wildlife are also attractive to human communities for their recreational and scenic qualities. Along Fourmile Creek, the Sandpiper's habitat has been impacted by human development, but it has also been degraded by historically intensive land use such as grazing. Livestock favor the tender grasses, rushes, and sedges that provide protection, nesting material, and food for the Sandpiper.

A Hearty Welcome to Amanda Nims

Colorado Open Lands is happy to introduce our newest team member, Amanda Nims! Amanda grew up on her family's farm in Western Massachusetts. Having grown up in an area where her family has been since the 1750s, Amanda understands deep connections to the land and the desire to protect working landscapes and lifestyles, and she has dedicated her professional life to it.

In her early career, she labored on a small scale agricultural operation and was employed by USFWS Farm Service Agency, where she administered federal farm bill programs.

After college, she spearheaded efforts to nominate the Greenfield Meadows for recognition as a national historic district, and was instrumental in a political campaign against rezoning that same prime farmland to become an office and industrial park. She also won awards for her development and participation in surveying the Green River of western New England.

In her spare time, she sat on the Board of her hometown's



Amanda Nims
Central Massachusetts.

Luckily for Colorado Open Lands, Amanda was drawn to the big skies and mountains of the West. Amanda will primarily be working on conservation easement acquisition in CO's North Fork Valley and Gunnison County Conservation Areas. Since starting in October, she has already helped COL protect 720 acres throughout the state!

Our Wish List!

As a community-based nonprofit, we are committed to operating as efficiently as possible and making the best use of any contributions we receive. Colorado Open Lands has saved thousands of conservation dollars through the donation of items on our Wish List by our generous donors.

Your support, whether financial or with the donation of the actual item, helps us keep our budget focused on our conservation projects.

Please contact us if you would like to help us acquire any of the following

- Single Lens Reflex (SLR) Camera.** Over the past five years we have been developing our aerial monitoring program, monitoring our conservation easements by plane and helicopter. The fast moving nature of this type of monitoring requires a camera that can capture high-resolution images without a prolonged delay. Estimated cost: \$800.
- Panoramic Camera.** Our stewardship team relies on photographic documentation to monitor our conservation easements every year. The best way to capture the landscape is with a panoramic view. In the past couple of years, camera technology has created the ability to capture panoramic views with one click, rather than having to take multiple pictures and post-processing into one view. This technology would make our monitoring process much more efficient and enable us to put more time and energy into conserving lands. Estimated cost: \$300.
- Ceiling Projector Screen.** We have a small office conference room that barely has room for the 8-12 bodies we typically host. A ceiling projector screen would free up floor space and allow people to concentrate on our message, rather than the elbow in their side. Estimated cost: \$500.
- 4x4 Vehicle.** A lot of the land we preserve is only accessible through rough terrain and backcountry roads. With over 250 conservation easements to monitor a year, having our own 4x4 capable car going anywhere would save a lot of money in vehicle rentals. If you are interested in helping us with this, please call or email our Stewardship Director, Cheryl Cufre (ccufre@coloradooland.org).

Individually we make a difference today... Together we make a difference for the future!

Did you know you could make a monthly donation toward any of our wish list items?
Call or email Cheryl Fox at cfox@coloradooland.org to coordinate the details!

Colorado Open Lands gratefully acknowledges its many contributors in the year 2010. In addition to those listed below, we also thank our many donors of under \$100 who were too numerous to list.

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- We would like to extend a special "Thank You" to all who contributed through work-place giving campaigns & support Community Shares! Your support is greatly appreciated!
- ...we want you to know that 96% of Colorado Open Lands' 2010 revenue went to support our programs!*
- Monthly Donors**
- We would like to extend a special thank you to our monthly donors. Our monthly donors provide long-term sustainable support for our Community Conservation Programs throughout the year!
- To join our monthly donor community you can go to our website (www.coloradooland.org) and click on the Donate Now! button. You can also email Cheryl Fox at cfox@coloradooland.org for more information.

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