

COLORADO OPEN LANDS

SPRING 2016

Stories from the Land

INSIDE:

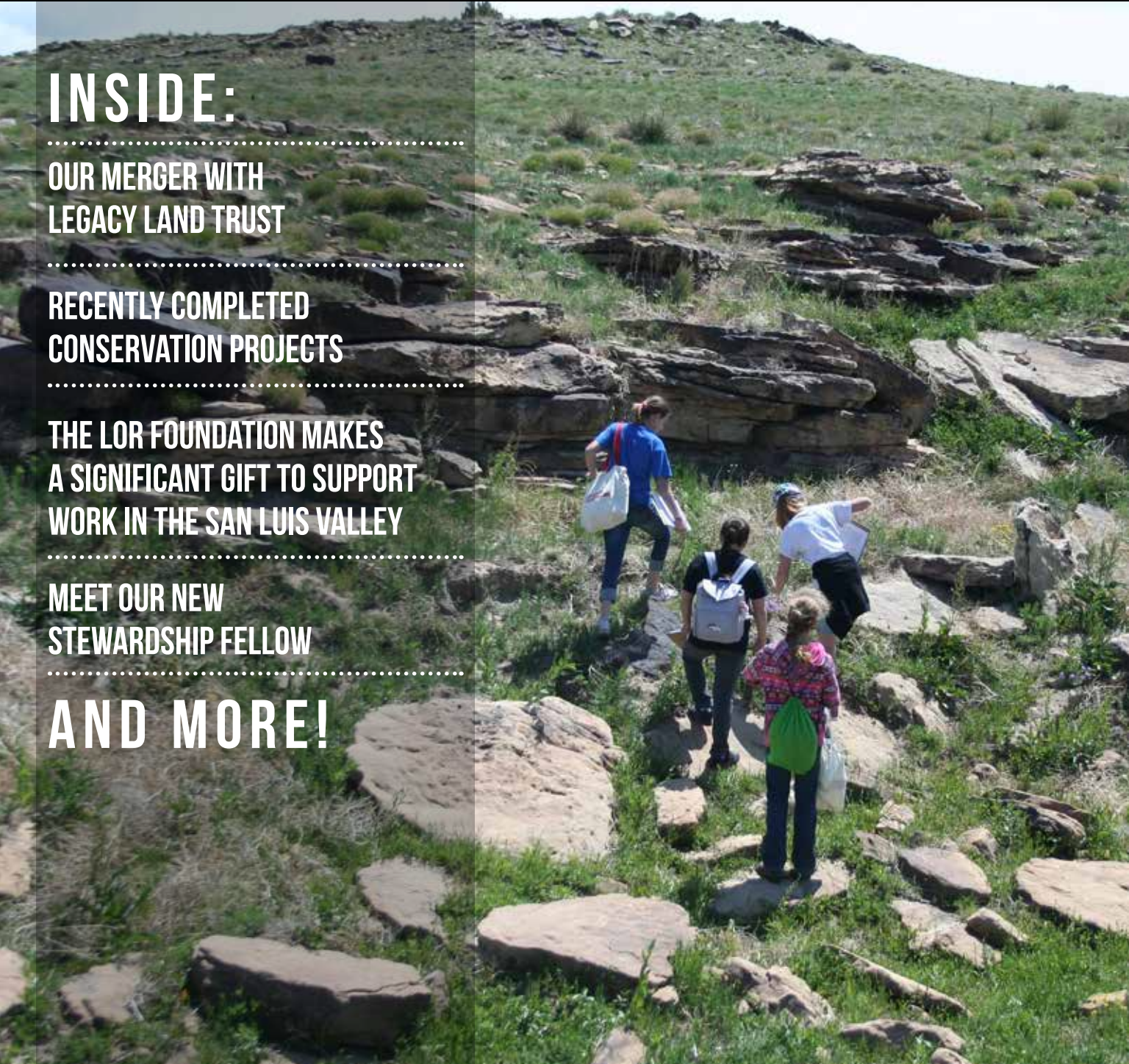
OUR MERGER WITH
LEGACY LAND TRUST

RECENTLY COMPLETED
CONSERVATION PROJECTS

THE LOR FOUNDATION MAKES
A SIGNIFICANT GIFT TO SUPPORT
WORK IN THE SAN LUIS VALLEY

MEET OUR NEW
STEWARDSHIP FELLOW

AND MORE!



WHY IS THIS WORK SO IMPORTANT?

Many Coloradans correctly assume that much of our state's land and open space is federally or state owned. While that is accurate, 60% is still owned by private individuals and organizations, and **only 2% is permanently protected by conservation easement.**

Colorado residents currently enjoy unparalleled quality of life. From our spectacular recreation opportunities, to our booming economy, to our unparalleled natural beauty, Colorado remains an attractive destination for young families, new graduates, second-home buyers, and retirees.

However, the attributes that make the state such an attractive destination are the same ones being threatened by population growth. Colorado's population increased 6.5% since 2010 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau), making it the third-fastest growing state in the country over that period. The State Demographer's office projects that our population will grow 60% by 2040, to 5 million. We in the land conservation industry are not anti-growth. We recognize that increased population can bring many benefits to the state. We simply believe that when this growth comes, we must manage it so we can protect all the treasures that we enjoy as Coloradans today.

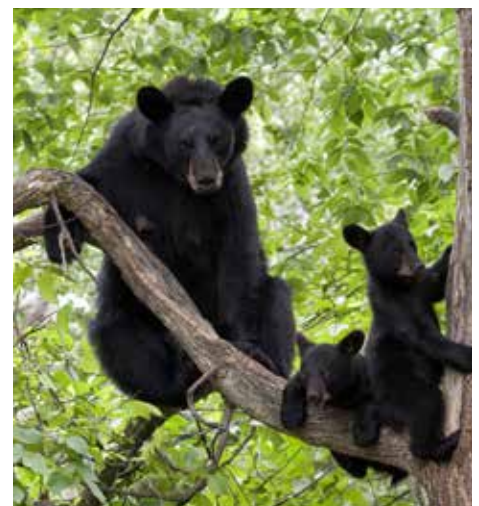
Permanent land conservation provides many benefits, including:

Local Foods Healthy Waterways Unmatched Recreation Amazing Scenic Views Productive Agriculture

BY PROTECTING OUR LAND, WE PROTECT OUR UNIQUELY COLORADO VALUES.

IN THIS ISSUE

Merging with Legacy Land Trust	4-5
New Conservation Easements interview with Sarah Parmar	6
Raven's Nest Nature Preserve	7
Meet our New Board Members	8
Catspaw Ranch	9
Planned Giving Legacy Society	10
Bar K Ranch	11
LOR Foundation Invests in San Luis Valley Partnership	12
Ross Castle Creek	13
Meet Fellow Andrew Bushnell	14
Dashboard of 2015 Accomplishments	15



(c)2016 All rights reserved.

All photos are property of Colorado Open Lands unless otherwise credited. This newsletter is written and edited by Colorado Open Lands staff.
Available online at www.ColoradoOpenLands.org

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Friends:

As a land conservation organization, we often focus on the stunning physical attributes of the land we work to protect. Rugged peaks, majestic forests, rushing rivers, rolling hay fields or sweeping plains all naturally draw our attention, capture our cameras, and beckon us to get outside to appreciate the beauty and bounty that surrounds us.

But just as captivating as the land itself, are the inspiring stories of the people who are part of the land we help to protect - stories about the fifth generation rancher who works the same ranch lands of her great-grandfather; the multi-generational family who works cooperatively with their community to carry on their shared Acequia farming traditions and culture; the angler who has hand-drawn maps of favorite fishing holes covering the backseat of their truck. Each of these people has their own story, each as unique as a fingerprint, of the wildlife, the waterways, the vistas and the history contained in the acres that make up the land we work to conserve.



They carry the stories of the land.

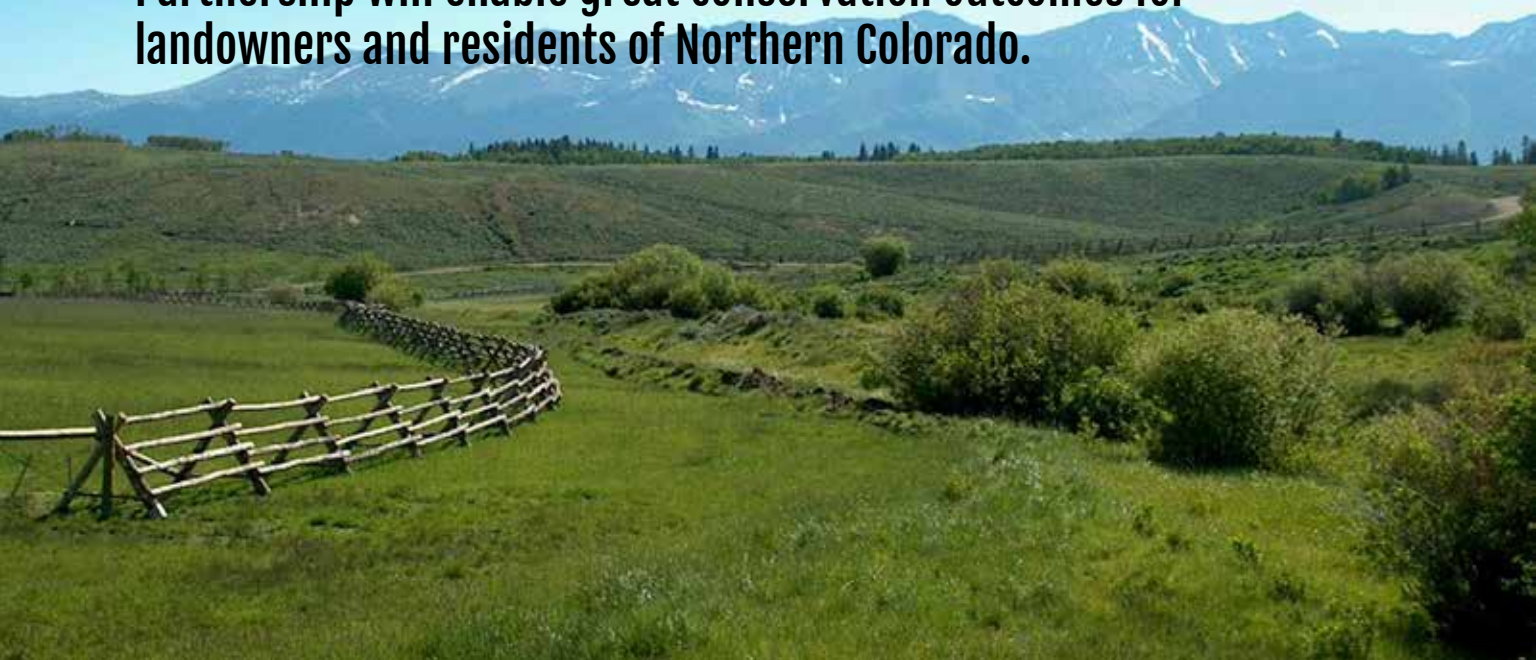
Stories are often where we start when we meet a landowner for the first time to talk about a conservation easement. The landowner tells us their story, and their stories of the land – the history, the families who came before, the changes they have witnessed in Colorado and most importantly the vision they have for saving a piece of Colorado for all our futures. Through these stories we learn what is most important, for the land, and for the family, and the impact of protecting it for the future.

We look forward to sharing more “Stories from the Land” in the coming year. I hope that you enjoy them, and encourage you to join the conversation by sharing your own story of the land with us. In the meantime, thank you for reading, and we hope that this year brings you many moments in Colorado’s beautiful open lands that make for great stories, for generations to come!

Tony Caligiuri
President and CEO, Colorado Open Lands

LEGACY LAND TRUST AND COLORADO OPEN LANDS HAVE MERGED!

Partnership will enable great conservation outcomes for landowners and residents of Northern Colorado.



At 12:00 a.m. on March 1st, it became official: Fort Collins' Legacy Land Trust (LLT) is now part of Colorado Open Lands. Last fall, we began evaluating a merger to determine how LLT and Colorado Open Lands could best serve the landowners, residents, wildlife, and landscape of Northern Colorado. The answer was clear - by joining forces, we could ensure that the great conservation work of Legacy Land Trust would remain protected - forever.

Our two groups have a long history of successful collaboration, and Northern Colorado has been a priority landscape for Colorado Open Lands for some time. Since our respective foundings, LLT and COL have worked with over 130 landowners to conserve over 70,000 acres of agricultural and natural lands.

However, as is happening in many places of the state, growth and development have continued their inevitable march, and their pace is quickening. Over the last fifteen years, Northern Colorado's population

“It is wonderful to see nonprofit organizations collaborate with each other, and it is especially encouraging to see two organizations decide to formally combine their efforts so they can carry out their common mission more efficiently. We are very excited about this merger and what it will mean for conservation efforts in Northern Colorado.”

-Ray Caraway, President, Community Foundation of Northern Colorado



grew more than any other region in the state. During that same period, Larimer County alone lost more than 70,000 acres of agricultural land to development.

What's more, over the next 35 years, our state demographer predicts that Northern Colorado will grow larger and faster than any other part of Colorado, with its population doubling by 2050. This growth has the potential to threaten the way of life that residents of Northern Colorado hold so dear.

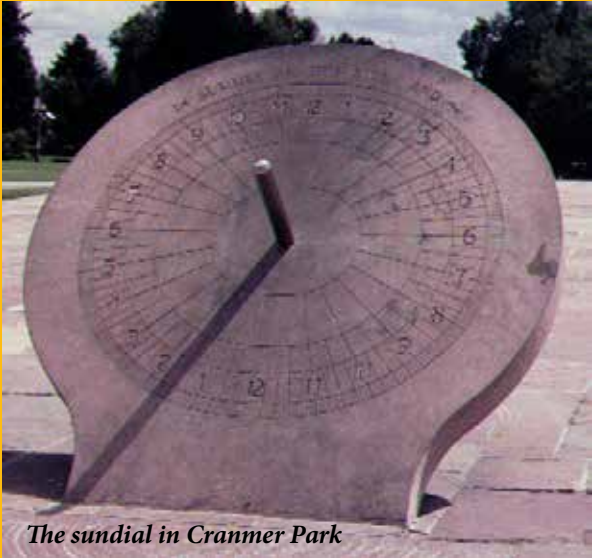
In the face of this growth, we realized that partnership and collaboration was our best strategy. Once both groups had completed our due diligence in December, our respective Boards of Directors made the decision to formally merge. Colorado Open Lands will continue LLT's fantastic work, united under one banner, to work with area landowners who voluntarily make the choice to permanently conserve their land.

As result of our merger, the LLT easements have been added to the Colorado Open Lands portfolio. We consider this an opportunity to work together with landowners who have chosen to protect the special conservation features of their property. Every year our stewardship team visits each property, walks the land, and talks with the landowner about what it means to have their property protected by a conservation easement. Colorado Open Lands relies on strong partnerships with its landowners and their commitment to conservation. We wouldn't be able to do this work without them.

COL is very grateful for the outstanding support we've already received from many LLT donors. These gifts will help ensure that conserved lands in Northern Colorado and around the state will endure for generations to come. If you choose to continue to support Colorado land conservation, we hope you continue to do so with Colorado Open Lands. Your gifts help us maintain the lands already protected, as well as to complete new projects to add to the area's already impressive conserved agricultural areas and open space.

Finally we wish to offer our deep and sincere thanks to LLT's Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, and stakeholders, who have made this merger a possibility, and frankly, a pleasure. We pledge to honor your legacy by protecting these lands for all time.

To help honor LLT's astounding work, please join us for Cheers for Conservation, to be held on June 4th. The event will feature an afternoon landscape tour, and a fun, casual evening cocktail party where we will honor LLT's Board of Directors with the George E. Cranmer award. Event details on our website soon!



The sundial in Cranmer Park

June 4, 2016

.....

Save the Date for Cheers for Conservation, honoring the Legacy Land Trust Board of Directors with our 25th annual George E. Cranmer Award!

INTERESTED IN CONSERVING YOUR LAND?

Q+A WITH OUR DIRECTOR OF CONSERVATION, SARAH PARMAR

Why is it a great time to consider conservation?

Last year, the Colorado legislature enacted some exciting changes to our state tax credit, dramatically increasing their potential benefit to you. After you finalize your conservation easement, you can now claim a credit of 75% of the first \$100,000 of your easement's value, plus 50% of the remaining value of the easement, up to a maximum credit of \$1,500,000. If you don't have a need for that credit yourself, Colorado is one of only a handful of states that allows you to transfer your credits to someone who wants to buy them. Colorado Open Lands can connect you with brokers to help you through that transaction.



If you are considering buying land, income from tax credits can help you to recoup some of that capital outlay. If you own land, this income may help you to reduce debt or make investments in your property. We have seen families use this to send their children to college or to buy interests of family members in order to consolidate ownership.

Those of us who call Colorado home, whether year-round or for a season, know that Colorado's population is rapidly increasing. We're the second-fastest growing state in the country, and we expect our current population to nearly double by 2050 (from 5.4M today to 9.6M in 2050). This added pressure may likely increase land values, along with property taxes, as we struggle to find places for all these new residents to live. Conservation allows you keep your land irrevocably intact, and may reduce your property taxes – permanently.

What kind of landowners does COL work with?

Colorado Open Lands is the only Colorado group that works statewide with a wide variety of landowners. Our landowners include ranchers, local governments, small urban farmers, and nonprofit organizations that host educational programs. We have worked in 43 Colorado counties, with all types of people and all types of land. While we focus our work in priority landscapes, we would love to take your call, no matter where in the state you have land you'd like to protect. If we don't work in your area, we will gladly point you in the direction of another qualified group that does.

How long does the process take?

Just as each property is different, each easement can take a different amount of time. Our average timeline in 2016 is approximately a year and a half. Some of this is up to you – if you can move quickly through some of the due diligence steps detailed in our landowner information guide, we can move just as quickly on our end. The longest part of the process can be applying for your state tax credit. In 2014, the state moved from a system in which it would rapidly issue credits, but could then audit those credits for years to come, to a pre-approval system in which it may take several months to review and approve your credit, but then neither you nor the buyer of your credits can ever be audited. Because of the time this process can take and the limited number of qualified appraisers in our state, it is great to reach out now to begin the process.

If I am interested in conservation, what is my first step?

Even if you aren't sure whether conservation is the best fit, we would love to walk you through your options. We know you will have a lot of questions, and our staff is knowledgeable and ready to help!



Find our guide to conserving your land on our website at
www.ColoradoOpenLands.org/considering_easement

RAVEN'S NEST NATURE PRESERVE

4,772 ACRES - BENT COUNTY

“Colorado Open Lands has ensured the permanent protection of our Raven’s Nest Nature Preserve, a very special place that benefits diverse creatures and brings the prairie to life for local schoolchildren.”

-Nicole J. Rosmarino, Director, Southern Plains Land Trust

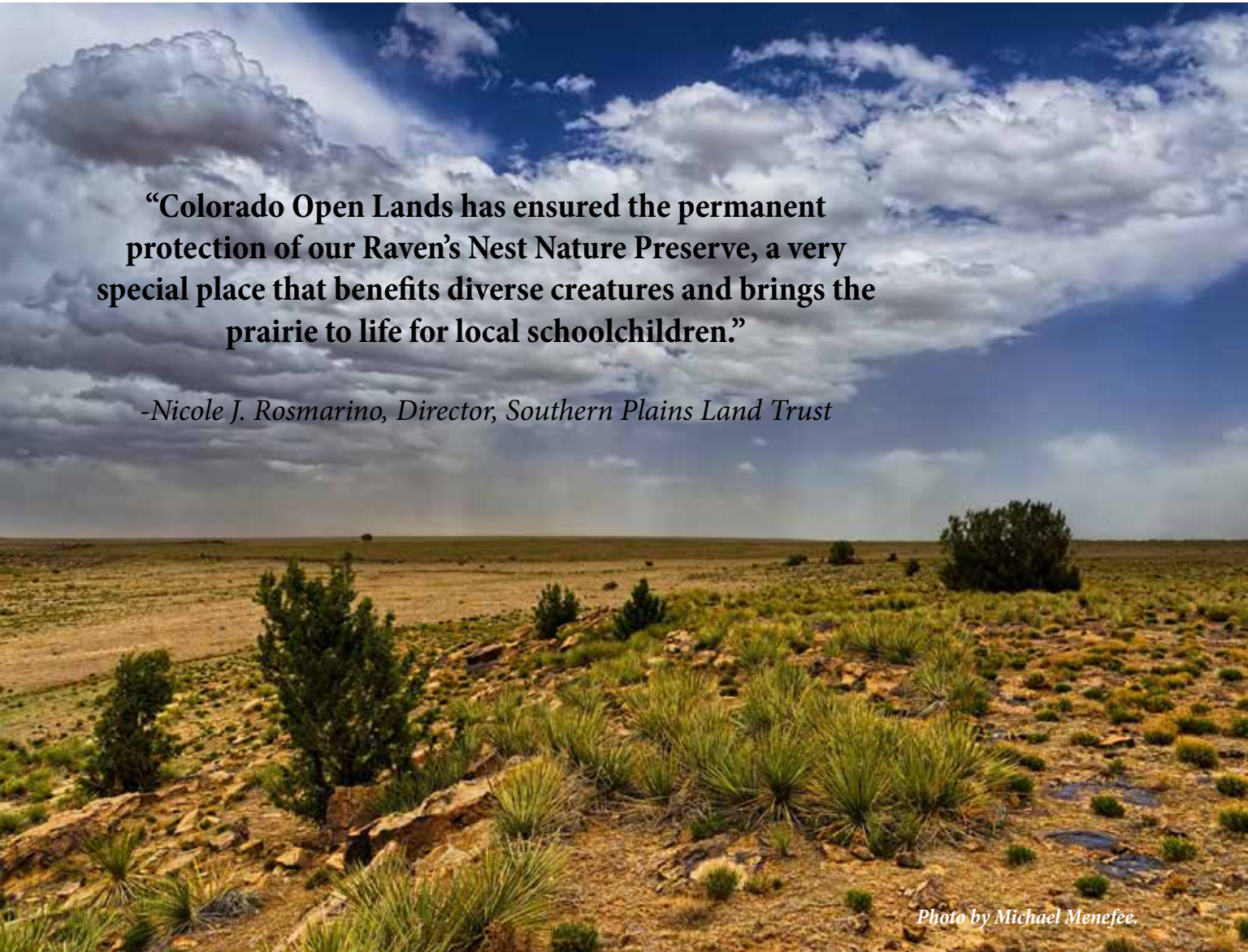


Photo by Michael Menefee.

Shortgrass prairie is one of the most imperiled ecosystems in North America. We are excited to announce that our first easement in Bent County is owned and operated by Southern Plains Land Trust (SPLT). SPLT is a Colorado-based non-profit that promotes restoration and protection of short-grass prairie habitat in southeast Colorado.

The property is located approximately 12 miles south of Las Animas, and consists of large expanses of shortgrass prairie, rock outcroppings and over 6 miles of creek frontage on Rule Creek and Penrose Draw. The scale of the property provides intact prairie habitat for burrowing owls, ferruginous hawk, pronghorn, and mule deer. SPLT currently hosts various groups, including local students, on the property to learn about the restoration and preservation of the shortgrass prairie. SPLT intends to increase the educational programming on Raven’s Nest Nature Preserve and already has wide community support and interest.

WELCOMING NEW BOARD MEMBERS

TATE MCCOY

Tate McCoy is Executive Vice President and Producer at Lockton Companies, LLC. He is a member of the Lockton Mountain West Executive Committee which has financial oversight of the Mountain West Series. In addition to his work at Lockton, he is active in the Denver community working as a board or committee member for various organizations including Ducks Unlimited and Mercy Housing Colorado.

BRIAN ROSS

Brian Ross served as the Executive Director of Colorado Conservation Trust from 2008 through 2013, when it merged with Colorado Open Lands. Prior to that, he worked in private real estate for Jones Lang LaSalle. Brian is a Colorado native whose love of our natural environment can be traced to his youth when he would ride his horse in the former wheat fields of west Denver, and worked as a wrangler in Rocky Mountain National Park.

GAIL SCHWARTZ

Originally from Chicago, former Senator **Gail Schwartz** fell in love with Colorado at the age of 12 on the top of Longs Peak. Prior to her political career as a state senator, professionally Senator Schwartz worked on community economic development and ski area planning. As a resident of Pitkin County and the Roaring Fork Valley for over 40 years, she is committed to preserving Colorado's majestic environment, while protecting water, natural resources, and agricultural lands.

CONSERVATORS SOCIETY

The Conservators Society is a select group of community leaders, philanthropists and committed conservationists convened to influence the work of Colorado Open Lands for the next generation. Members of the Conservators Society, each of whom makes a significant annual pledge of support, enjoy regular opportunities to grow their involvement in, and understanding of, conservation.

To learn more about joining the Conservators Society, or to receive an invitation to the Society's annual August luncheon, please contact Brandy Bertram at 303.988.2373 ext. 222, or email bbertram@ColoradoOpenLands.org.

CATSPAW RANCH

7,030 ACRES - ARCHULETA COUNTY

“When I visit Catspaw Ranch, I feel as though I am being transported back to a time when Colorado was more rugged, more pristine, more real.”

*- Joel Nystrom
Stewardship Specialist*

The Catspaw Ranch is not only visually striking, but it encompasses the headwaters of the Navajo River, one of the most pristine major watersheds in Colorado. Protection of the Catspaw Ranch ensures the quality of the Navajo as it flows into the San Juan River and joins the Colorado River. Colorado Open Lands was excited to accept the transfer of the easements that protect this incredible property.

Given its status as one of the more remote and unpopulated areas of the state, the ranch offers an opportunity for wildlife to thrive, including threatened or endangered species like peregrine falcons, Colorado River cutthroat trout, lynx, and wolverines. The last documented gray wolf and grizzly bear in Colorado were spotted within a few short miles of this easement, and the possibility remains that more still roam the vast property.



CONSERVATORS SOCIETY FOUNDING MEMBERS

SUE ANSCHUTZ-RODGERS

THE DELINE FAMILY

THE FULENWIDER FAMILY

DR. BEN & JEAN GALLOWAY

MARTIN & MYTHILY HERZ

PETE & LINDSEY LEAVELL

WILL MORGAN

PAUL PHILLIPS & SUSAN ZIMMERMAN

DANIEL PIKE

DOUGLAS & HAZEL STEVENS PRICE

KOGER & MARCIE PROPST

DANIEL L. RITCHIE

BRIAN ROSS

WILLIAM DEAN SINGLETON

DICK & AUDREY STERMER

PAMELA & BOB TROYER

BILL VOLLBRACHT

PLANNED GIVING LEGACY SOCIETY

A Q+A WITH MEMBER NANCY WEST

Why do you support private land conservation?

My spirits soar when I see beautiful land. I need open landscapes to really breathe. My husband and I had the joy of showing our granddaughter from Atlanta a vista in Northern Colorado that we hope she'll show her own grandkids. While our feet were on public land, we looked across a vast conserved private ranch to Rocky Mountain National Park. In 50 years, she will see the same lovely view, a view that will quiet her soul and feed her belly, and provide habitat for animals like pronghorn, deer, wild turkey, and big cats to roam freely.

Why you have selected a planned gift as a way of giving?

We know we can have a positive impact and yet be confident that we'll have resources during our lives. At my core is a hope to leave this marvelous planet no worse from my living here and perhaps even a bit better for it. Anticipation is great—anticipating a family beach vacation or ski trip is as much fun as the event itself. Knowing that we're leaving a legacy from our estate to further private land conservation gives me pleasure now. It's the right thing to do.



Nancy West with Geoff Feiss

Why you have chosen to include Colorado Open Lands, specifically, as a recipient?

The people at COL have impressed me with their professionalism and leadership. I've worked with the staff—they were courteous, generous, and very good at their work. They were open to possibility and consistently worked hard to steer towards success. I'm referring to the merger between Legacy Land Trust and COL, which can make private land conservation flourish in Northern Colorado. Through its comprehensive and farsighted view of land conservation, COL can influence land conservation policy and practice across the state.

Equally important to me is that the people I know at COL can imagine Colorado being an example of adapting to changes in our economic, cultural and environmental climate. I can easily picture other land trusts across the nation following COL and Colorado's footsteps.

Colorado Open Lands is incredibly grateful to Nancy West and Geoff Feiss for their pledge to include Colorado Open Lands as a beneficiary of their estate. Their pledge helps protect our promise of perpetual land conservation and gives them lifetime membership to our Planned Giving Legacy Society.

To learn more about how you can to designate Colorado Open Lands as a beneficiary in your will or living trust, please contact Brandy Bertram at 303.988.2373 ext. 222 or email her at bbertram@ColoradoOpenLands.org.

BAR K RANCH

294 ACRES - GUNNISON COUNTY



“We really value the wildlife, and with development in the area we are trying to strike a balance. Long term, we would like to see the land remain in the original homestead sizes or larger. There will be industrialization in the area, but we don’t feel this is a reason to discard other values such as wildlife, water, air and scenic views.”

-Roger Cesario, owner, Bar K Ranch



In December 2015, a local Gunnison family permanently protected the final 294 acres of their ranch, adding to previously conserved properties, for a total of over 1,300 acres permanently conserved with Colorado Open Lands!

The Bar K Ranch is located in the northwestern portion of Gunnison County, about 16 miles northeast of Paonia, and is almost completely surrounded by Gunnison National Forest lands. The property is composed of high country aspen forests, oak groves, open shrublands, and several ponds and drainages. The ranch is mostly used for sheep grazing. Big game such as elk, mule deer, moose, black bear and mountain lion are known to live on the property. Protection of the property is important as it is a key inholding surrounded by public lands.

The project was completed in partnership with Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy and the landowner received a grant for transaction costs from the Gunnison Valley Land Preservation Board.

LOR FOUNDATION INVESTS IN SAN LUIS VALLEY PARTNERSHIP!



Almuyah Dos Acequias, 181 acres in Costilla County, conserved by COL in 2014.

Colorado Open Lands is deeply grateful to the LOR Foundation for their multi-year gift to fund critical conservation work in the San Luis Valley. In the last five years, we have had a special partnership with the acequia community in the San Luis Valley, organizing their Congreso and helping establish a water rights legal assistance program. It is this unique acequia heritage, which supports a rich agricultural and ecological system, which makes this area a high priority for COL.

We are now extremely pleased to announce that the LOR Foundation is helping COL and other conservation partners build on our significant investment in the area with a gift awarded in November of 2015. With this funding, COL, Western Rivers Conservancy and Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust have created The San Luis Valley Conservation Fund to work collaboratively in identifying conservation opportunities and completing new projects, and also in administering a \$2 million regranting fund for local organizations to invest in the Valley's land and water resources.

The gift has also allowed COL to create our first official satellite office and hire local staff. We're happy to welcome Judy Lopez to the COL team, effective April 1. Judy was most recently Executive Director of the Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Districts, engaging teachers and students in the outdoors, helping them develop and deepen a wonder and respect for our natural world. Judy has been involved in education for over twenty years, including as a public school teacher. Welcome, Judy!



Judy Lopez leading a class in the San Luis Valley

ROSS CASTLE CREEK

102 ACRES - GUNNISON COUNTY



Conserved in November of last year, the Ross Castle Creek property consists of 102 scenic acres of aspen forests, meadows and riparian habitat along Castle Creek. The property is located within the upper reaches of Ohio Creek Valley in Gunnison County, which is incredibly scenic and contains highly productive ranchland. There has been a strong effort to conserve property in the valley, and Colorado Open Lands is particularly excited to add these acres to the aggregate protected lands in the area. The property is situated adjacent to other COL easement lands and Gunnison National Forest land. The project was completed in partnership with Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy. Transaction costs were paid for by a grant from the Gunnison Valley Land Preservation Board.

WELCOME ANDREW BUSHNELL

With generous support from the Argosy Foundation, we are pleased to welcome Andrew Bushnell to our staff as Colorado Open Lands' 46th Fellow!



What do you love about Colorado?

I love the access to open spaces and the value that people put on environmental responsibility and land conservation practices. Colorado gets 300 days of sunshine a year and has great mountain biking, fly fishing, and skiing. Who *wouldn't* want to work here?

What's the biggest threat to open space in the West?

The biggest threat to open space in the West is increased population growth and development pressure. Beautiful landscapes attract people and with populations in the West growing faster than any other region in the U.S., our open spaces are coming under threat from suburban sprawl and exurbanization.

Why did you want to apply to the COL Fellowship program?

I wanted to join an organization with a mission I believed in. The work of COL is integral to preserving the unique lands of Colorado, and I wanted to be a part of that work. In addition, the Fellowship places an emphasis on learning and professional development, and I knew that if I wanted to create a future career in land conservation, this fellowship would be a unique opportunity to gain valuable training while contributing to a cause that I support.

What kinds of projects are you excited to work on?

I am excited to get out this summer and monitor our portfolio of conservation easements. Getting out in the field and seeing some of these amazing properties that we protect is always a highlight of working in stewardship. In addition, meeting with landowners who support conservation and the work of COL is an exciting opportunity to hear from the people who practice land conservation every day and learn how COL can best support them in managing their lands for continued conservation values.

Since 1999, Colorado Open Lands has offered a Fellowship program to outstanding recent graduates who wish to dedicate their careers to land and water conservation. Colorado Open Lands funds these two-year positions and provides training and real-world experience that equip each Fellow to continue their conservation careers and become the next generation of industry leaders. Former fellows now hold leadership positions at prominent conservation organizations in Colorado and across the country.

The Fellowship program is funded with generous support from local and national foundations and private individuals. Colorado Open Lands is currently fundraising for its next Fellowship position. For more information on supporting this innovative program, contact Jordan Vana at JVana@coloradoopenlands.org.

2015 DASHBOARD

LAST YEAR, WITH THE SUPPORT OF OUR DONORS AND PARTNERS, COLORADO OPEN LANDS ACHIEVED GREAT CONSERVATION SUCCESSES!

10
NEW PROJECTS

15,619
NEW ACRES

FOR A TOTAL OF

412
TOTAL CONSERVATION EASEMENTS
CURRENTLY HELD

322,306
TOTAL ACRES UNDER EASEMENT
WITH COL

STEWARDS A TOTAL OF OVER
\$284,616,093
IN DONATED LAND VALUE

HIRED OUR
46TH
FELLOW

LAUNCHED CONSERVATORS SOCIETY OF
17
FOUNDING MEMBERS

PROJECTS IN
43
COLORADO COUNTIES

355 SOUTH TELLER STREET, #210
LAKEWOOD, CO 80226

WWW.COLORADOOPENLANDS.ORG • 303.988.2373

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DR. DONALD APTEKAR
RYE AUSTIN
CAROLYN BURR
ROB DELINE
WENDELL FLEMING
REBECCA FRANK
FORD FRICK
CHARLIE KURTZ
PETE LEAVELL
TATE MCCOY
WILL MORGAN

PAUL PHILLIPS
BRIAN ROSS
CHARLIE RUSSELL
GAIL SCHWARTZ
WES SEGELKE
DICK STERMER
BOB TROYER
JENNIFER WEDDLE
JOHN WOODARD
RUTH WRIGHT

EVENT DETAILS ON OUR WEBSITE SOON!

COLORADO OPEN LANDS
PRESENTS THE 25TH ANNUAL

SAVE THE DATE

SATURDAY, JUNE 4

CHEERS
for CONSERVATION