WHICH COLORADO DO YOU WANT?

FALL 2019 NEWSLETTER
AN OPPORTUNITY LIKE NEVER BEFORE

As you’ll read in the following pages, Colorado Open Lands is at a critical juncture in our land conservation work. With increasing success over the last few years, we have begun to attract and pursue large-scale opportunities for the advancement of conservation across the state. In fact, we currently have a waiting list of landowners and partners ready to complete the permanent conservation of their land — an incredible and meaningful gift to our state’s future. These opportunities — which represent a total area larger than all of Colorado’s 41 state parks, combined — come at a time when the pace of population growth in our state threatens these same lands and, along with it, our Colorado way of life. With the resources needed to bridge the gap, Colorado Open Lands is positioned to accomplish this enormous increase in the pace of our work over the next three years. Join us in helping secure the future of Colorado. And as always, reach out to us if you have any questions.

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You’ve probably had this experience: Sitting around talking with friends about a great hike, a perfect camp sight, or a stunning drive you enjoy. Comparing notes and experiences in the natural majesty that is Colorado.

But in recent years, how often has that conversation more often morphed into discussion about weekend traffic jams, over-crowded trailheads and ranches that are turning into subdivisions?

You see it every day. Our state is changing right before our eyes. Traffic is becoming epic. Where we used to find solitude on trails and in campgrounds there are now crowds. Wildlife is feeling the pinch as people and development encroach on open space. Some of our most important farmland is being converted to residential and commercial uses. Fights over water use and water storage are growing more intense. We are beginning to love Colorado to death.

Colorado is at a profound crossroads. The decisions we make in the next few years will determine what the future of Colorado looks like for generations to come. For those of us who love this place, it’s critical that we act now to help shape and protect the future of our state.

We have reached a moment where our usual pace of work is not good enough. If we don’t take this moment to double down and act now our opportunity will be lost forever.

Over the past few years, Colorado Open Lands has been making an intentional investment of time and resources in building strong relationships in the communities where we work. Because of this, we have generated a pipeline of more than 100 exciting conservation projects around the state totaling more than 240,000 acres. To help put that in perspective, that is more acreage than contained in all of Colorado’s 41 state parks. This is an amazing opportunity at a perfect moment to protect more open land than all of Colorado’s state parks combined.

We believe Colorado Open Lands is uniquely positioned to deliver on this promise. Over the past 40 years, COL has successfully protected over 500,000 acres of land in nearly every corner of our beautiful and diverse state, with an ambitious goal of protecting a total of 800,000 acres in the coming decade.

We are well poised to do some great work. The one piece necessary to make this effort successful is your involvement and support.

We are blessed to be a part of such a beautiful and special place. But with those blessings and good fortune come a responsibility to give something back – to protect this place that we love.

Thank you for what you have done and what you can do to protect what is special about Colorado and the American West.

Thank you,

Tony Caligiuri
President
Colorado Open Lands

PRESIDENT’S LETTER
We have a limited opportunity to decide what our state will look like in the future. According to the Colorado State Demographer’s office, Colorado will gain 2.3 million residents in the next thirty years. That’s a 40% increase by 2050.

To help visualize how large a number 2.3 million is, imagine adding the current population of another entire ten-county Denver Metro area, including Aurora and Lakewood. Where will these people go?

We already feel the squeeze. Los Angeles-style traffic congestion like you see on our cover is growing. Where we used to find solitude on trails and in campgrounds, there are now crowds. Wildlife is feeling the pinch as people and development encroach on open space. Some of our most valuable farmland is being converted to residential and commercial uses. Conflicts over water use and water storage are growing more intense. Are we loving Colorado to death?

Our state is at a crossroads. The decisions we make in the next few years will determine the future of Colorado for generations to come. For those of us who love this place, it’s imperative that we act to help shape the future of our state.

The mission of Colorado Open Lands is to permanently protect our most critical lands and waterways while we still have the chance. We now have an opportunity to protect an additional quarter-million acres over the next three years, but we need the resources to do it. By investing now, we can ensure that the best of Colorado today, remains forever.

Land conservation requires vision. It includes an understanding of what makes Colorado so special and a commitment to investing in those places that need protection. It means building on the work of those before us who decided

"The world of great opportunity is available now, as it has always been, only for those with great vision."

- Andrew Carnegie
to save important land for future generations. After all, land is finite - we can’t make more of it. If we develop all we have, there will be nowhere left for wildlife to thrive, for water to flow unimpeded, for places to grow food, for us to relax and recharge our hearts and minds.

Colorado Open Lands is the ideal partner for those visionaries who wish to invest in the future of our state. We have the expertise, the relationships, and the passion to get it done. At this moment, despite the extraordinary pressures of population and development, the opportunity for meaningful conservation still exists. But the window is closing and the resources to complete this vision for Colorado are lacking.

**Today presents an opportunity to stand up for open lands while we still can.**

When we reflect on the conservationists that came before us like Teddy Roosevelt, who created the National Parks system, we’re so grateful for their visionary leadership. That they thought to leave some land aside for the future. That the land feels safe and protected. We have the opportunity now to give that gift to the future Coloradans.

We can choose a Colorado that still has some places set aside, left open. We can choose to maintain some views intact, without evidence of human interference. We can choose to let animals thrive and let people find solitude. We can choose to conserve.

Investing time and resources into land conservation takes a visionary spirit - the foresight to recognize inevitable changes and plan for them as best we can. When you think of Colorado in the future, **please ask yourself, what kind of Colorado do you want?**

*Photos on this article by JoŠ Fielder.*
LEADING THE STATE WITH A NEW CONSERVATION TOOL

This fall, Colorado Open Lands completed a conservation easement project on 72 acres of riverfront land in Weld County. The South Platte-Big Thompson River Confluence River Mitigation Bank project is located just south of Greeley and consists of wetlands, riverbanks, and cottonwood galleries, providing critical habitat for deer, turkey, and waterfowl.

This project, however, comes with an added exciting feature. Adding a mitigation banking element is a way to allow entities that may be creating environmental impacts elsewhere to purchase credits to offset that impact. Our partner, Westervelt Ecological Services, holds the “bank” of credits, under arrangements privately negotiated with the landowner. When, for instance, a private developer or a municipal government negatively affects a river or stream, they are required by law to purchase credits to offset their impacts, usually of land that is more valuable or of a larger area than they affected. There is a finite number of credits for purchase, and all projects are vetted and approved or denied by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

In areas of the state where land values and associated tax credits aren’t always enough motivation to consider conservation, mitigation banking can be a new way to help landowners while protecting ecologically-sensitive land at the same time.
In the South Platte watershed, snowpack starts at the highest peaks, then melts and collects to form the river, which branches off into countless streams, ditches, and waterways. You can think of a watershed like your circulatory system. Just like the flow of your bloodstream, if any part of that system is diverted, pinched, blocked, or rerouted, the effects on the entire system can be disastrous.

Over the last several hundred years in Colorado, people have been making those adjustments and changes to the state’s waterways. Every little change has added up to an overall system that was suffering. Over time, streams and wetlands have been altered from their original meandering forms. This has dried up surrounding wetlands and marshes. The goal of Colorado Open Lands’ Riparian Reconnect project is to restore these waterways to the way nature had intended. We are pleased to announce we have completed work on several of these project sites this year.

Both the DM Ranch and Lone Rock Ranch properties in Park County now have waterways that have been restored to remake wetlands and improve wildlife habitat. Tree planting work on the Lone Rock Ranch property also included labor from state inmates who are nonviolent offenders through an agreement with Colorado Correctional Industries. The opportunity for outdoor work is highly desired among inmates and allows construction cost savings for COL as well.

Early monitoring of these properties has shown that the plantings were successful, and the stream health in the area is now vastly improved. These projects have been completed with support from Great Outdoors Colorado, the Park County Land and Water Trust Fund, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the Colorado Water Conservation Board, and private donors.
On October 23rd of this year, Colorado Open Lands and Continental Divide Land Trust officially merged operations. We at COL recognize the passion and dedication that the Continental Divide Land Trust (CDLT) board and staff have for permanently protecting Colorado’s wild and working lands. At the meeting to formalize the merger, CDLT Board President Kim Dufty said, “I hope our community sees this as an opportunity to continue and strengthen land conservation in Summit County.”

CDLT had been in business for 25 years, and has conserved 16 properties, including many that offer public recreation opportunities to Summit County residents and visitors.

CDLT Board member and Summit County Open Space Senior Resource Specialist Katherine King said, “CDLT is thrilled to see this come to fruition. It’s been a long time coming. COL will be an amazing partner in conservation. We are excited to introduce them to our Summit County Community.”
To demonstrate Colorado Open Lands’ ongoing commitment to Summit County, the boards of directors from both organizations enthusiastically agreed to add $250,000 to the existing CDLT funds at The Summit Foundation. These funds will function as an endowment for the protection and stewardship of CDLT’s conserved lands in perpetuity. This ensures that the scenic views, healthy waterways, and wildlife habitat on these lands will endure for future generations.

“To see the land continued to be protected is the goal,” said COL Board Member Susan Fox Pinkowitz.

Colorado Open Lands will continue to have dedicated staff in the CDLT Breckenridge office.

Summit County Deputy Treasurer and CDLT Board Member Ryne Scholl added, “I’m confident we’ve chosen the right partner in COL. Their resources are vast and expand our ability to protect our easements in perpetuity.”

President of COL Tony Caligiuri said, “Summit County is a very special place, full of scenic beauty and unmatched recreation opportunities. It’s an honor for our organization to be entrusted with the past accomplishments of CDLT. We pledge to continue that amazing conservation work, so that Summit County continues to be one of Colorado’s most outstanding places to live, work, and play.”

Looking for an excuse to check out Summit County?
JOIN COLORADO OPEN LANDS FOR THE WILD AND SCENIC FILM FESTIVAL ON JANUARY 11!
MORE INFO ON BACK COVER.
WE’RE ON A ROLL!

9,832 ACRES • 9 PROJECTS • 6 COUNTIES
SINCE APRIL 2019

Since our last newsletter issue in the spring, Colorado Open Lands has made huge strides towards our strategic plan goal of 800,000 acres conserved by 2025. Our current tally is almost 550,000 acres, and our pipeline of interested landowners and pending projects is large enough to get us over the finish line. With your support, we can achieve our goal for the permanent protection of Colorado.

SOUTH PLATTE - BIG THOMPSON RIVER CONFLUENCE

This project represents Colorado’s first-ever mitigation bank, and also protects critical wetlands along two rivers just south of the Town of Greeley. These lands provide important habitat for deer, turkey, and many species of waterfowl.

The project was completed in partnership with Westervelt Ecological Services. See page 6 of this issue for more information on how mitigation banks can help incentivize land conservation!
ALAMOSA RIPARIAN PARK

The Alamosa Riparian Park is a 203-acre public access park that will provide recreation and educational opportunities for the public. Trails on the property will connect with the city’s existing and planned trail system. The park includes approximately 1.5 miles of the Rio Grande, which supports a variety of habitats that provide forage, cover, breeding grounds, and migration corridors for a variety of wildlife.

The project was completed in partnership with Western Rivers Conservancy, which facilitated the purchase and transfer of the land into the city’s ownership. Other project partners include: Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), LOR Foundation, Gates Family Foundation, The Outcalt Foundation, El Pomar Foundation, Trinchera Blanca Foundation, San Luis Valley Federal Bank and San Luis Valley Health. *Photo provided by Western Rivers Conservancy.*

BAKER’S PEAK

Baker’s Peak Ranch in Moffat County comprises 7,311 acres operated as a cattle ranch in an area with ever-increasing development pressure. The land is rich in habitat and animal migration corridors, supporting the Bears Ears elk herd, the second-largest herd worldwide.

This project would not have been possible without many partners, including the Bridges family, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), The Nature Conservancy, and private donors.

Sarah Parmar, COL’s Director of Conservation said, “We recognize the extraordinary wildlife habitat and heritage that are the legacy of unfragmented ranches in Moffat County. It is a privilege to work with Mr. Bridges to conserve Baker’s Peak Ranch and support his stewardship and vision.”
This project protects 412 acres of irrigated meadows and sagebrush and three-quarters of a mile of Carbon Creek. Located in the Ohio Creek Valley, the property lies in an area that is highly-trafficked during tourist season and provides a viewshed from adjacent county roads to the Anthracite Range and Carbon Peak. The land is leased by nearby ranchers for cattle grazing.

The project was completed in partnership with Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy.

These 455 acres in Gunnison's East River Valley provide habitat for Gunnison sage-grouse, black bear, elk, and moose and are highly visible from State Highway 135, the oft-traveled route from Gunnison to Crested Butte. This project was completed in partnership with Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the Gunnison Valley Land Preservation Fund. Photo provided by Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy.

This 200-acre ranch is in Montrose County, and includes a 1-mile stretch of the Uncompahgre River. It includes habitat for Sandhill crane, black bear, mountain lion, and mule deer. The landowner carefully manages the ranch to help the wildlife thrive. Much of the surrounding land has been fragmented by development, making conservation of this ranch all the more important.

The project was completed in partnership with Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) and Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy. Photo provided by landowner.
**UPPER MILL CREEK RANCH III**

The owners of Upper Mill Creek Ranch added 380 acres to the existing 728 acres already conserved. The ranch features habitat for Gunnison sage-grouse, as well as black bear, elk, and moose, and includes one and a half miles of creek frontage. The owners are a fifth-generation ranching family. The project was completed in partnership with Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the Gunnison Valley Land Preservation Fund. *Photo provided by Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy.*

**DYKES PROPERTY**

This property is about 10 miles from the city of Gunnison and includes critical Gunnison sage-grouse habitat, with four active leks (term for sage-grouse roosting sites) on the property and in the surrounding area.

The project was completed in partnership with Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the Gunnison Valley Land Preservation Fund. *Photo provided by Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy.*

**CALOGER PROPERTY**

Comprised of rolling sage brush and pine forest, the Caloger property also includes habitat for large mammals like elk, moose, black bear, and mountain lion. It also includes critical habitat for Gunnison sage-grouse, with three leks on the property and the surrounding area.

The project was completed in partnership with Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy, Natural Resources conservation Service, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. *Photo provided by Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy.*
YEAR-END GIVING
REMINDERS!

Your generous support enables us to conserve the land we all love!

DON’T DELAY — MAKE YOUR YEAR-END GIFTS TODAY!

Give online at ColoradoOpenLands.org by midnight MST, December 31st!

If giving by mail, make sure your gift is postmarked no later than December 31 to count in this tax year.

On behalf of the entire Colorado Open Lands family, thank you for your generosity. We value your trust in us and look forward to putting your gifts into action that will result in continued conservation success in 2020 and beyond!

Questions?
Contact Alyssa Acosta at 303-988-2373 or by email at AAcosta@ColoradoOpenLands.org
**Take advantage of matching opportunities!**

- Colorado Gives Day is December 10th. Schedule your Gives Day donation at ColoradoGives.org to ensure that your gift counts toward Community First Foundation’s generous incentive fund.

- Don’t forget your employer matching programs! Check with your employer or email Alyssa Acosta, Director of Philanthropy, at AAcosta@ColoradoOpenLands.org to make sure you make the most of your workplace giving options.

- Every gift through December, 31st will be matched up to $100,000 by a private donor.

**Consider gifting appreciated stock!**

- With stocks and mutual funds near all-time highs, savvy investors are avoiding capital gains taxes by donating appreciated stocks. You can transfer securities directly from your brokerage account to ours. Visit ColoradoOpenLands.org/Ways-to-Give for transfer account information. All gifts must be received by COL by 12/31 to count for the 2019 tax year.

**Don’t forget your IRA!**

- When you turn 70 ½ the IRS requires you to begin taking money out of your IRA (Required Minimum Distributions). You can avoid taxes, reduce your taxable income, and meet your required minimum distribution by donating directly from your IRA to Colorado Open Lands. Talk to your IRA account representative to learn more about how to make a Qualified Charitable Distribution in time for the year-end deadline.

**Increase deductions by bundling future gifts!**

- You may find that bundling your charitable donations into a single year increases the benefit of itemizing, saving you money. Talk with your tax advisor to see if bundling your gifts would make sense for you and your financial plan.

**Share your love of the land!**

- A gift in honor of a friend or family member is a special way to show someone you care this holiday season. Just let us know who your gift is in honor of and provide us with their contact information. We’ll reach out with a special note on your behalf. Wouldn’t you love to hear that you inspired a gift that will forever protect Colorado’s most critical working, wild, and open lands? Priceless!

**Consider gifts of land**

- Contact us to learn how your gift of land can be conserved and put to use to help us conserve even more open space!
Please remember Colorado Open Lands on Colorado Gives Day, December 10, or make your pledge today at coloradogives.org/coloradoopenlands!