

# FALL 2021 NEWSLETTER

## ACHIEVING THE IMPOSSIBLE

NEW FACES AT COL

INTRODUCING THE CENTENNIAL SOCIETY

FOURTEEN NEW CONSERVATION SUCCESSES

TRIBUTE TO A CONSERVATION VISIONARY

# Introducing new faces at COL

It's a busy year at Colorado Open Lands, including an exciting expansion to our staff! We've added three new positions to help advance our conservation and stewardship work. **Dirk Rasmussen** is COL's first Restoration Program Manager. He will be overseeing our restoration programs, like Riparian Reconnect, and helping connect COL with more funding and opportunities to enhance conserved lands to the benefit of Colorado's people and wildlife. **Charlie Goodson** is our new San Luis Valley Conservation Project Associate, helping add capacity to our San Luis Valley work and deepening our community connections so we can better assist the local community. **Dennis Lyamkin** is COL's 48th Conservation Fellow, generously funded by the Morgridge Family Foundation. Dennis is currently helping monitor our easements and assisting with all other stewardship activities. We also have two temporary employees, **Rachel Fanch**, who is supporting a wide-ranging GIS mapping project, and **Lauryn Howlett**, who is assisting with easement monitoring.



## **DIRK RASMUSSEN** RESTORATION PROGRAM MANAGER

"COL is uniquely poised to not only *conserve* land but also *restore* landscapes that promote diverse and resilient ecosystems. As communities and landscapes face changes from population pressure, habitat fragmentation, and climate change, I want to build alliances where stewardship of wild landscapes and sustainable working landscapes is a shared core value. Through our restoration efforts, we have the opportunity to enhance Colorado landscapes while strengthening the fabric of local communities."

## **CHARLIE GOODSON** SAN LUIS VALLEY CONSERVATION PROJECT ASSOCIATE

"I'm excited to be joining COL and working with landowners in the San Luis Valley. It is such a unique valley with important heritage and customs that should be protected for future generations and I'm honored to help continue the work here in the Valley."



## **DENNIS LYAMKIN** MORGRIDGE FAMILY FOUNDATION LAND STEWARDSHIP FELLOW

"I'm honored to be working with such a skilled, experienced, and passionate group of folks at COL. Since starting my role, I've had the privilege of meeting landowners with long historical ties to this state. Their stories never cease to amaze me."

## **RACHEL FANCH** GIS SPECIALIST

"I'm grateful that applying my GIS mapping skills contributes to the permanent protection of Colorado by supporting the COL stewardship department. I look forward to learning more about our beautiful landscape and the importance of each conservation easement."



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Cover Photo of the San Juan Skyway by Jon Liebowitz

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## **LAURYN HOWLETT** STEWARDSHIP INTERN

"Joining COL has allowed me to connect with landowners around the state while helping protect Colorful Colorado for future generations to enjoy."

# PRESIDENT'S LETTER

## COLORADO OPEN LANDS

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Dear Friends,

After a long year cooped up at home, it felt great to get out this year to enjoy the scenery and remind ourselves of the magnificence of the state of Colorado.

Perhaps you enjoyed a trip to **Crested Butte** driving through the open meadows and ranches of the **Gunnison Valley**. Or maybe you enjoyed the stunning vistas of **South Park** from **Kenosha Pass**, the golden cottonwood galleries along the **Colorado River**, the historic farms of the **San Luis Valley**, or the unobstructed views of **Longs Peak** as you travel between **Loveland** and **Fort Collins**. Maybe you enjoyed the views while hiking the **Colorado Trail**, walked the **Beaver Brook Trail**, drove along the scenic **Poudre River Canyon** or enjoyed a fresh peach or bottle of wine from **Palisade**. These are the views and experiences that define Colorado and remind us why we live here.



**The fact that these things still exist at all is no accident.** Each one is thanks to large areas of conserved open lands. Whether they provide us with spectacular scenery, a great fishing spot, important wildlife habitat, or a quiet place to hike in the mountains, these lands and waters are the reason Colorado is so special.

**Our team works every day with landowners across the state to protect and improve your wide open vistas, conserve important wildlife habitat, and make more great fishing and hiking available for Coloradans.**

At Colorado Open Lands, we have conserved more than 590,000 acres of open space over the past 40 years. It's a great accomplishment that was only possible with the support of people like you.

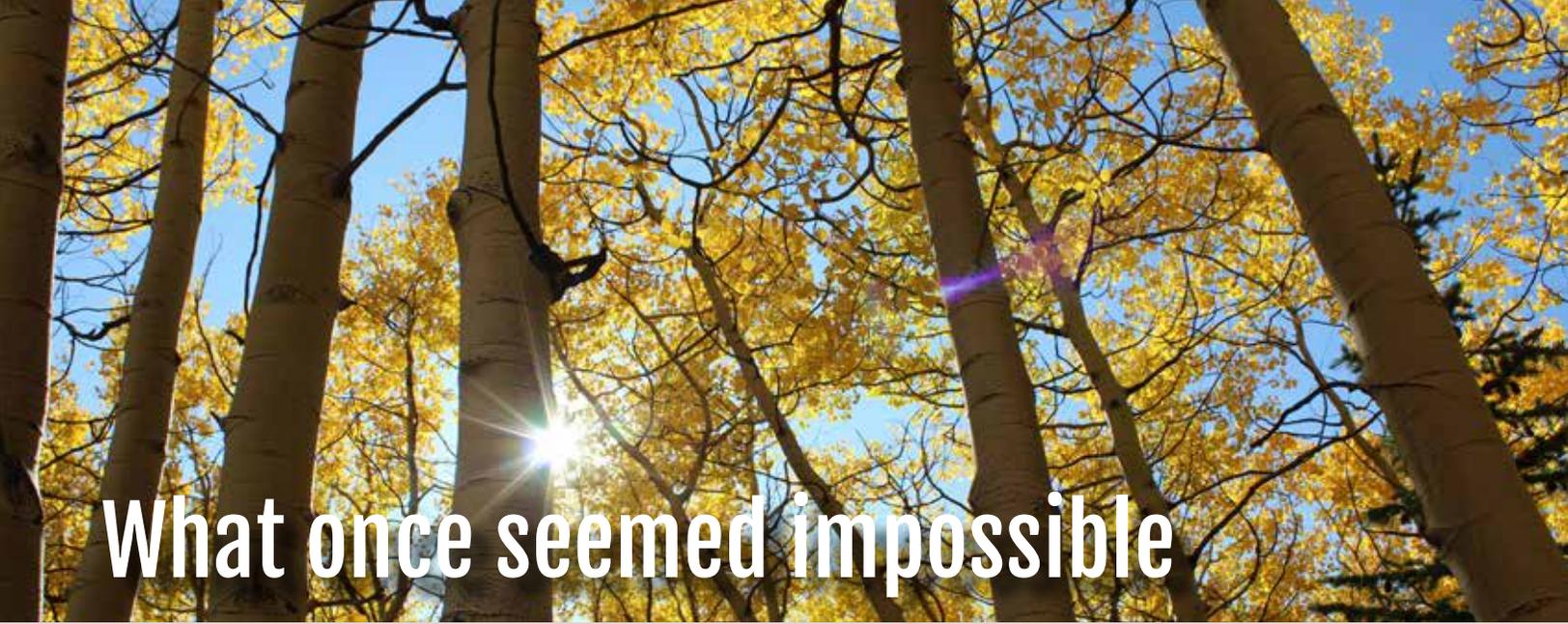
**However what's more exciting is that we have a pipeline of projects waiting that equals more than 250,000 additional acres of land – that's more than all of Colorado's state parks combined!**

Colorado is changing fast. Millions of people are expected to move here in the coming decades. That's why we feel a sense of urgency about our work.

We have a small window to have a real impact on the future of our state and save the remaining places that make Colorado so special. But we can only do it with your help!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tony Caligiuri". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tony Caligiuri  
President and CEO



# What once seemed impossible

There we were, around a U-shaped table in a meeting room on a historic ranch in Southern Colorado in the Fall of 2013. Present were the board members and staff of Colorado Conservation Trust (CCT) and Colorado Open Lands (COL) to hash out the details of our planned merger. With it came the promise to develop a strategic plan for the next ten years. By the end of that weekend, the chairs of the two boards signed what we called the Trinchera Accord; a document stating our good faith intent to merge and form a new and impactful statewide land conservation organization to serve all of Colorado.



I'd been with CCT since 2008, and now have served as Colorado Open Lands' Communications Director since 2013. Usually I tell the stories of our impact through our newsletters and social media as the anonymous voice of COL. But in this case, I wanted to share the remarkable work that I have witnessed first-hand since that merger in 2013, and more importantly the incredible opportunity ahead. When we adopted our bold strategic plan after that merger, it was with the firm intention that it not sit on a shelf and gather dust.



*The signing of the Trinchera Accord. Back, left to right: Russ Caldwell, Charlie Kurtz, Rebecca Frank, Rob Deline, Ruth Wright, Wendell Fleming, Rye Austin, Charlie Russell, Tim Schultz, Pete Leavell. Front: Paul Phillips and Wes Segelke.*

*When we adopted our bold strategic plan after the merger, it was with the firm intention that it not sit on a shelf and gather dust.*

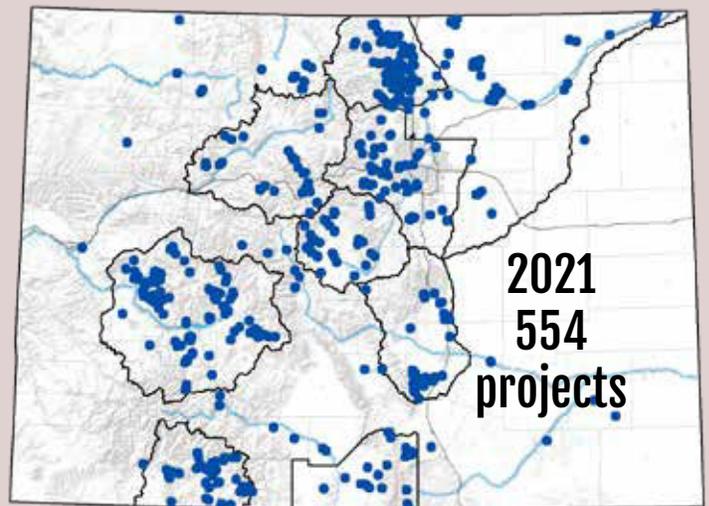
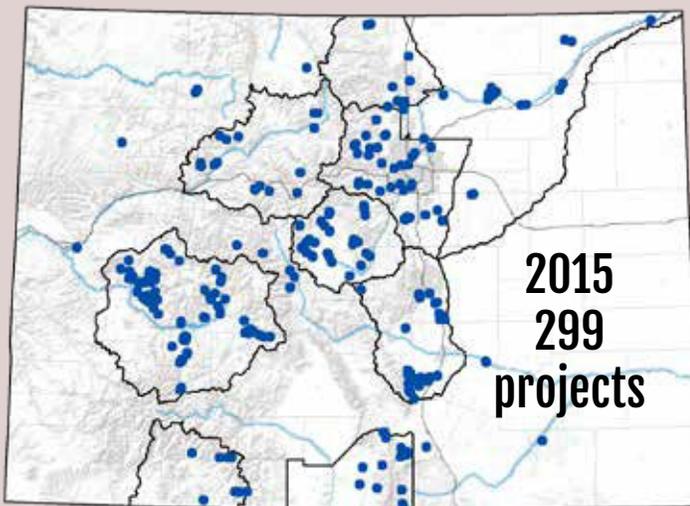
We intended it as a guidepost for making a positive, permanent impact on our state's remaining open landscapes. Some of the goals seemed awfully ambitious at the time – maybe even impossible. But I've learned that with the tremendous support of Coloradans like you, we can achieve those ambitious goals to protect the future of Colorado.

It became clear to all of us at Colorado Open Lands that there was a limited amount of time left to protect the best places in Colorado, and we understood that we could only do so by increasing our pace of conservation work. In fact, that plan challenged us to triple our pace of conservation over the next ten years – a daunting yet exciting goal.

In the first 30 years of our history at COL, we had conserved nearly 400,000 acres of open space. We looked to double that amount in the next decade. At the time it seemed simply aspirational, yet only six years later we are on course to hit 600,000 acres of conservation by the end of 2021. Most importantly, we now have a waiting list of projects that when completed will allow us to meet our goal of 800,000 acres of land conserved in Colorado.

*We now have a waiting list of projects that, when completed, will allow us to meet our goal of 800,000 acres of land conserved in Colorado.*

This is a wonderful opportunity that was made possible by our generous supporters and partners. We have worked hard to build relationships and trust in the communities and landscapes where we work. Our conservation staff are now located throughout Colorado and our opportunities seem limitless. While we still need to double down to get this enormous pipeline of conservation work completed in the coming few years, we are also asking ourselves what else can we do to protect and improve the remaining open lands of our beautiful state.



One important area of focus is improving some of these conserved lands for the benefit of wildlife and the local communities that depend on them. That is why we have just recruited a new Restoration Program Manager to build upon the success we have had in restoring rivers and streams in South Park to create a vision and implement a plan for a statewide program to improve fish and wildlife habitat.

*One new area of focus is improving some of these conserved lands for the benefit of wildlife and the local communities that depend on them.*



*One Moffat County project protects the world's second-largest elk herd*

We continue to expand our geographic reach both through new conservation projects and mergers with several local land trusts.

Since 2015, we have completed our first-ever conservation projects in seven additional counties: Alamosa, Bent, Custer, La Plata, Moffat, Ouray, and San Miguel. Those projects include the protection of winter habitat for the second-largest elk herd in the world, a community park in Alamosa that provides garden plots for a local immigrant community and the creation of a beloved local park in Custer County. During that same period we have also completed four mergers with local land trusts to help support the conservation goals of those communities, with another planned merger this year.

Finally, we recognized and embedded in our strategic plan the belief that not only must we protect the remaining open lands of Colorado, but we also must help steward a conservation ethic in the next generation of Coloradans. That's why we have advanced a suite of education programs that promote conservation leadership in young adults, launch new conservation careers through our Conservation Fellowship program and work directly with teachers to give them the tools and training to inspire students around the state.

*Every time we accept a donation to Colorado Open Lands, we make a promise to advance meaningful conservation in Colorado.*

*We continue to expand our geographic reach both through new conservation projects and mergers with several local land trusts.*

Every time we accept a donation to Colorado Open Lands, we renew our promise to advance meaningful conservation in Colorado. I'm pleased to see that our results show that we've kept those promises. As I look toward the future and the completion of our strategic plan, I personally appreciate that we truly have made the impossible a reality. I also know what we need to do to get to the finish line. We need to keep growing and adapting to Colorado's challenges

and opportunities. We need to keep listening to local Coloradans when they tell us their vision to improve their communities through conservation. And of course, we need the continued support of our exceptional donor community.

As we celebrate our 40th year and the midpoint of our 10-year strategic plan, we're honored to take a moment here with you to pause and reflect, as we charge into the future ready and equipped to achieve our goals.



*An Alamosa County project provides community garden space.*



*Conservation Leadership Series teaches the importance of land and water conservation.*



*Teacher Workshops host teachers in immersive outdoor instruction they can take back to their classrooms.*

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COLORADO OPEN LANDS PRESENTS

# CENTENNIAL SOCIETY

CELEBRATING FAMILIES COMMITTED TO THE STEWARDSHIP  
AND PROTECTION OF COLORADO'S CONSERVED LANDS

Colorado is America's Centennial State, founded in 1876. With that in mind, we created the Centennial Society to honor and recognize those **who create an estate gift for Colorado Open Lands**, ensuring our ability to steward and protect conserved lands for the next 100 years, and beyond.

Colorado's land provides wildlife like bighorn sheep, elk, and eagles a place to live, migrate, and raise their young. Our valleys, steppes, and plains support ranching and farming families who make their living on the land and in doing so, drive our rural economies and give us delicious, nourishing local food. Throughout the state, our abundant land and waterways give residents and visitors alike world-class nature experiences that keep them coming back to their favorite fishing, hunting, photo-taking, and life-enriching spots year after year.

WE DO NOT INHERIT THE LAND FROM OUR  
ANCESTORS; WE BORROW IT FROM OUR CHILDREN.

As a member of our Centennial Society, you ensure the permanency of this work to protect Colorado's land. Centennial Society members share a passion for the permanent protection of the lives, livelihoods, and lifestyles that open landscapes provide for Colorado. Further, they understand and value the critical role that private landowners play in the stewardship of our state's natural resources.

By joining the Colorado Open Lands Centennial Society, you can help protect Colorado's most valuable treasures – our land and water – for the next 100 years, and beyond.

Your commitment to include Colorado Open Lands in your estate planning secures your membership. Estate gifts come in all shapes and sizes. Your legal and financial professional advisors can help you explore all possibilities, including identifying ways to maximize the financial and tax benefits of your estate gift.

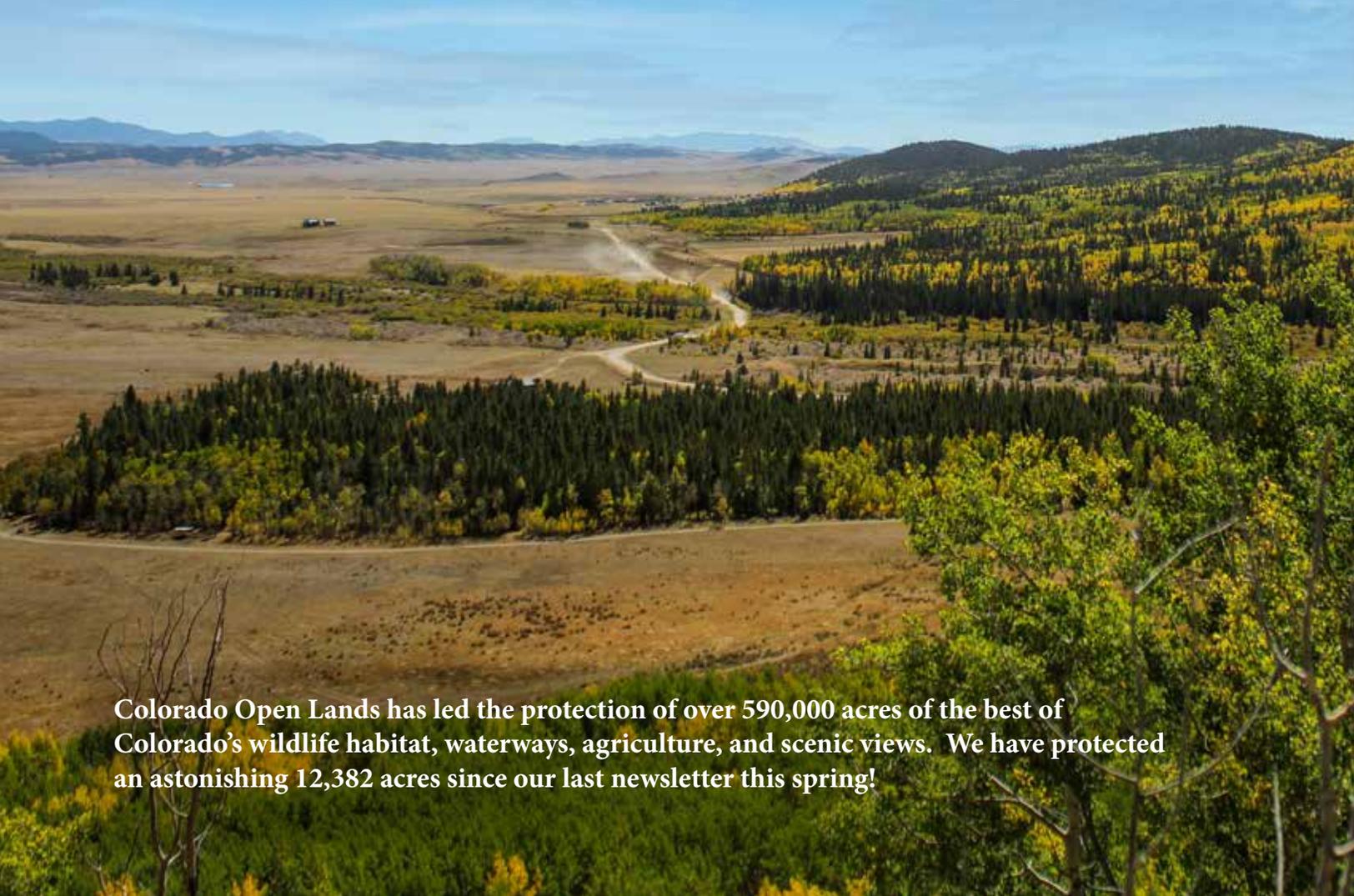
Have you already included Colorado Open Lands in your estate planning? Let us know or learn more about getting started at [www.ColoradoOpenLands.org/Centennial-Society](http://www.ColoradoOpenLands.org/Centennial-Society) or by contacting Alyssa Acosta, Director of Philanthropy at [AAcosta@ColoradoOpenLands.org](mailto:AAcosta@ColoradoOpenLands.org) or at 303-988-2373 x216.

THE  
**CIETY**

WARDSHIP  
D LANDS



# Conservation Projects Newly Completed!



**Colorado Open Lands has led the protection of over 590,000 acres of the best of Colorado's wildlife habitat, waterways, agriculture, and scenic views. We have protected an astonishing 12,382 acres since our last newsletter this spring!**

## Lake County

### **1 - Shawn Andrick Memorial Preserve - 103 acres**

This public open space was protected in partnership with the Central Colorado Conservancy and Lake County. The property is a narrow canyon along the Arkansas River between Buena Vista and Leadville with wetlands, a gold-medal trout fishery, and great habitat for elk and big-horn sheep. The Top of the Rockies / Collegiate Peaks Scenic Byway winds through the canyon with open views of this property. The preserve will open to the public in 2022.

## Sedgwick County

### **2 - Petersen Bend - 100 acres**

Ducks Unlimited purchased this farm a few years ago and converted some of the fields to seasonal shallow-water wetland compounds to support migratory waterfowl during the prime flyover periods in the spring and fall in Eastern Colorado and Nebraska. The property includes a mixture of upland and wetland habitat as well as foraging areas for white-tail deer, pheasant, turkey and pronghorn.



the Gunnison River frontage and unique forests, as well as habitat for bald eagles, bighorn sheep, black bear, elk, mule deer, moose, and mountain lions. It is visible from the Silver Thread National Scenic Byway and the Alpine Loop Colorado Scenic Byway coming out of Lake City.

## San Luis Valley

The following four projects are a part of our Acequia Initiative, which is funded by Natural Resource Conservation Service, Great Outdoors Colorado, the LOR Foundation, the Gates Family Foundation, the Trinchera Blanca Foundation, and the Colorado Conservation Partnership.

### 4 - Aragon Ranch - 198 acres

Located at the base of the 14,000-foot Culebra Peak, Aragon Ranch has a long history in agriculture. This fifth-generation ranch is located just east of San Luis. Three acequias (historic irrigation ditches) irrigate the property. The family raises mixed-breed cows and grows native grass and alfalfa hay to feed the herd in the winter. In addition to the cattle, the ranch provides critical winter habitat for elk herds that migrate through the Sangre de Cristo mountains.

### 5 - Quintana Ranch - 146 acres

This historic ranch supports a family cattle operation, but it is also important to many species of wildlife that utilize this area as a migration corridor as they travel to and from the mountains in the spring and winter. Conservation of this property also protects important cultural resources in this historic community.

### 6 - R&R Family Farms - 348 acres

This 348-acre property is home to a stretch of the beautiful Culebra River and is a testament to the commitment the community shares to keep the land and water together. As a result, key habitat for elk, deer, turkey, bald eagles, and Rio Grande cutthroat trout is protected.

## Hinsdale County

### 3 - Slumgullion Center - 58 acres

This property outside of Lake City is owned by Lake Fork Valley Conservancy and comprises part of the Slumgullion Earthflow, an active landslide that moves as fast as 7 meters per year on the most active portions. It's been slowly flowing down the mountainside for 1,200 years!

The earthflow is recognized by scientists and government agencies as a site rich in research opportunity and of high conservation importance. Additionally, the Slumgullion Center property includes Lake Fork of



R&R Family Farms



Roybal Ranch



### **7 - Roybal Ranch - 215 acres**

This historic ranch is irrigated by two historic acequias: the San Acacio and Francisco Sanchez. The ranch supports grass-fed cattle and sheep, while the livestock share the ranch with many species that utilize this critical wildlife corridor as they travel to and from the mountains in the spring and winter.

## **South Park**

### **8 - Private Ranch - 1,291 acres**

We have accepted a very significant conservation easement on a ranch in South Park, protecting a key elk migration corridor and a rare fen wetland, as well as protecting an iconic view of the Mosquito Range for travelers along Highway 285 in South Park. The easement was essential for the owners to retain family ownership of the land. We are respecting the landowners' wishes for privacy by keeping the name and location anonymous.

### **9 - Buckskin Gulch - 74 acres**

The Buckskin Placer property lies between the Alma Cemetery and Pike National Forest west of the Town of Alma. This property was the historic townsite of Buckskin Joe, the original mining district in the area and one-time county seat. The property includes one mile of Buckskin Creek, wetlands, open meadows, aspen and conifer forests, and has been used by the public for camping. Park County Road 12 traverses the property as the route for travelers visiting 14ers Mt. Lincoln, Mt. Bross, and Mt. Democrat. The Town of Alma's water supply system, including a pond and infiltration gallery, is located on an inholding within the property, so this easement also serves as water supply protection for the Town.

One year ago, this property was up for sale with likely development for custom lots with stream frontage, when two community members purchased the property to hold until the Town could buy it. They, along with the Alma Foundation, have saved the property for public open space. The



*Table Top; photo by Ben Guillon*

## Larimer County

### 10 - Dakota Ridge - 245 acres

COL has partnered with the City of Loveland, Larimer County, and Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) to protect 245 acres along the iconic hogback ridge that stretches between Loveland and Fort Collins. Dakota Ridge will soon include public trail access that will be incorporated into the regional trail system, providing more equitable access to open space across the community.

### 11 - Table Top - 158 acres

The Preble's meadow jumping mouse is federally designated as threatened, and worldwide, its only habitat exists in a few counties on the Colorado/Wyoming border. Colorado Open Lands has just protected the first phase of the 222 acres of this habitat with a conservation easement, with the second phase to be completed later this year.

Town of Alma raised funds needed for the purchase and expenses from a GOCO Resilient Communities Grant, the Park County Land & Water Trust Fund, and the Alma Foundation.



*Preble's meadow jumping mouse, by Craig Hansen, USFWS*



*Buckskin Gulch*



*TL Bar Ranch*

## **Gunnison County**

### **12 - Ocate Property - 157 acres**

The Ocate Property is located within the Cebolla Creek valley. It is bisected by County Road 27 and consists of irrigated meadows and pasture, sagebrush shrublands, and more than one mile of frontage along Cebolla Creek. Habitat is provided for Colorado River cutthroat trout, elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, moose, black bear, mountain lion, and Gunnison Sage-grouse. The landowners are committed to improving the natural resources on the property and have many restoration and enhancement projects occurring on the land. This project was completed in partnership with Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Gunnison Valley Land Preservation Fund.

### **13 - Weidler Property - 178 acres**

This property east of Gunnison fronts on County Road 46 and is visible by travelers along US Highway 50 en route to Gunnison. The property consists of open

irrigated meadows and pasture and contains one-half mile of frontage along a channel of the Tomichi Creek. Wildlife habitat is provided for bald eagle, ferruginous hawk, greater sandhill crane, as well as bighorn sheep, elk, moose, mountain lion, mule deer, and pronghorn. The project was completed in partnership with Natural Resources Conservation Service, Gunnison Valley Land Preservation Fund, and Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy.

## **San Miguel County**

### **14 - TL Bar Ranch - 9,111 acres**

This remarkable ranch with phenomenal scenic views near Telluride includes very important wildlife habitat, and includes over four miles of local creek frontage. Protection of this property increases the amount of protected land within this sage-grouse population by 30%. Many other species migrate through the ranch or make it their home, including elk, mule deer, black bear, mountain lion, bald eagle, and peregrine falcon.

# We couldn't have done it without Governor Dick Lamm

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## A tribute by Rebecca Frank

Vision and leadership are political commodities that define all too few public office holders in any era, but seemingly more so today than ever before. Former Gov. Dick Lamm was the exception. He was the sui generis governor whose bold visionary leadership has benefited Colorado throughout many decades and into today.

The last time I spoke with Gov. Lamm was at a Colorado Open Lands function, Cheers for Conservation. He was the keynote speaker at an event to honor those Colorado treasures, Ken and Ruth Wright, for all their contributions to the common good, particularly for the environment and conservation.

I thanked him for taking a risk on me, the first woman appointed to the Colorado Wildlife Commission in what was then the state's 109-year history. He also took a risk when the wildlife commission presented him with a white paper detailing threats to the state's wildlife heritage and how to protect and conserve that heritage into the 21st century. That early white paper was the initial impetus for the political campaign, People for Great Outdoors Colorado. Shortly thereafter, Gov. Lamm left office and handed the campaign off to Gov. Roy Romer, who enthusiastically advanced it to the ballot and eventual passage of Great Outdoors Colorado in 1992.

GOCO today is a critically important partner with land trusts throughout the state, helping to fund a broad variety of conservation initiatives through Colorado Lottery proceeds, efforts that the bold, visionary leadership of Gov. Dick Lamm envisioned almost a half century ago.

Those of us who were privileged to know and work with Gov. Dick Lamm are deeply thankful for his vision and leadership. And today, in the fall of 2021, Colorado Open Lands board members, staff, and thousands of supporters say, "It couldn't have been done without you, Governor Dick Lamm."

*Rebecca Frank is a current board member of Colorado Open Lands and an original board member of Great Outdoors Colorado.*



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PRESENTS

# For Love of the Land

MAY 17, 2022

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF LAND CONSERVATION

Out of an abundance of caution for the health and safety of you, our treasured friends and supporters, we have made the decision to delay our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary For Love of the Land Celebration. No one is more disappointed than we are that we cannot safely gather in person this autumn. However, it is with renewed excitement that we look toward May 17, 2022, when we can all welcome Spring to Colorado, along with our Keynote Speaker Kirk Johnson, Sant Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History and former Vice President and Chief Curator of the Denver Museum of Nature and Science.