



FALL 2023 NEWSLETTER

LIKE WHAT YOU **DON'T** SEE?

IN THIS ISSUE:

ADVANCING LEGISLATION TO SUPPORT GROUNDWATER CONSERVATION
ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONSERVATION LEADERS
6 NEW CONSERVATION PROJECTS

New faces at COL

Join us in welcoming three new staff members to our team! Colorado Open Lands has a staff of 26 professionals in four office locations: Lakewood, Salida, Alamosa, and Westcliffe.

Elizabeth Silverman DIRECTOR OF PHILANTHROPY

Elizabeth spent much of her childhood exploring the beautiful state of Colorado. She learned how to ski at 3 years old and hiked her first fourteener, Mt Elbert, at 6. In 2010, she moved to Colorado full time and spent over a decade working for the American Heart Association, promoting healthy living and inspiring people to donate to support their mission of saving lives. In October, Elizabeth joined COL as the Director of Philanthropy and is excited to combine her professional passion of partnering with volunteers and donors with her personal love for Colorado. Elizabeth still loves to ski, hike and explore nature and now hopes to share these same experiences with her twin daughters.

Get in touch: esilverman@coloradoopenlands.org or 303.988.2373 ext. 216.



Kevin Allen LAND AND WATER STEWARD

Kevin joined the Colorado Open Lands Stewardship team in September. Prior to COL, Kevin worked as a consultant in the Colorado real estate and water markets. His previous work experience highlighted the need for land and water conservation, and he is grateful to be a part of an organization with a history of success. Kevin earned his degree from Colorado State University, where he studied Environmental and Natural Resource Economics while triple minoring in Real Estate, Environmental Sustainability, and Sustainable Water. In his free time, Kevin loves to explore the outdoors - skiing, camping, trail running, and playing hockey are some of his favorite activities.

Seth Armentrout LAND AND WATER STEWARD (ALAMOSA OFFICE)

Seth joined the Stewardship team in October after serving three years with the Rio Grande Farm Park in Alamosa, Colorado. On this 38-acre community farm, Seth directed educational programming, managed infrastructure projects, and organized stakeholders at the nexus of local foods and land and water stewardship. Originally from Brighton, Colorado, Seth received his degree in Political Economy and Environmental Studies from Tulane University in New Orleans. He writes songs, searches for cutthroat trout, and eats good root vegetables. Seth is excited to support landowners in their stewardship efforts and learn from a community of dedicated conservationists.



Dear Friend of Colorado Open Lands,

I was talking with our communications director at COL recently, discussing how challenging it can be to communicate the impact of our work when the things we are most proud of are the things you *don’t* see out and about in Colorado.

How do we help friends and supporters like you understand the amazing impact you have by pointing out what’s *not* there?

For instance, when you drive over Kenosha Pass and see the expansive open space in front of you – that breathtaking view exists because your support helped us protect that open land forever. Or when you go over La Veta Pass into the San Luis Valley or Wolf Creek Pass on your way to Pagosa Springs – so much of that open space is protected by Colorado Open Lands because of your support. There is probably not a scenic drive in Colorado that has not benefited from the work of Colorado Open Lands and our partners in conservation.

In some cases our impact can be noticed in the things you *do* see: wildlife moving in open meadows, unimpeded mountain views from your favorite trail, produce stands with local produce grown on protected Colorado farms, cattle grazing on working ranches. But still, it’s the things you don’t see that are our proudest achievements.

Colorado is at a critical crossroads, but we still have an opportunity to make a positive impact and determine the kind of state that we want to enjoy today, and also the Colorado we want to leave for our children and grandchildren. I hope you will join us in this important mission!

Sincerely,

Tony Caligiuri
President and CEO



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Celebrating what you **don't** see

When we take people out on the land to share the impact of our conservation work, it seems a little funny to talk about what you don't see. Perhaps it's the housing development that is *not* there. Or the strip mall, the truck stop, or the parking lot.

But while we sometimes talk about what is *not* there, it's what *is* there that provides so much benefit for Colorado. It's the wildlife, the flowing streams and rivers, the majestic views, the working farms and ranches. It's the ability to still witness a roundup, eat a local peach, or enjoy a dark night sky. Maybe it's the smell of wet sagebrush. Sometimes it's the bugling of an elk, the sound of rustling leaves, or just the sound of nothing at all. Whatever *is* there, those are the things that make Colorado special.

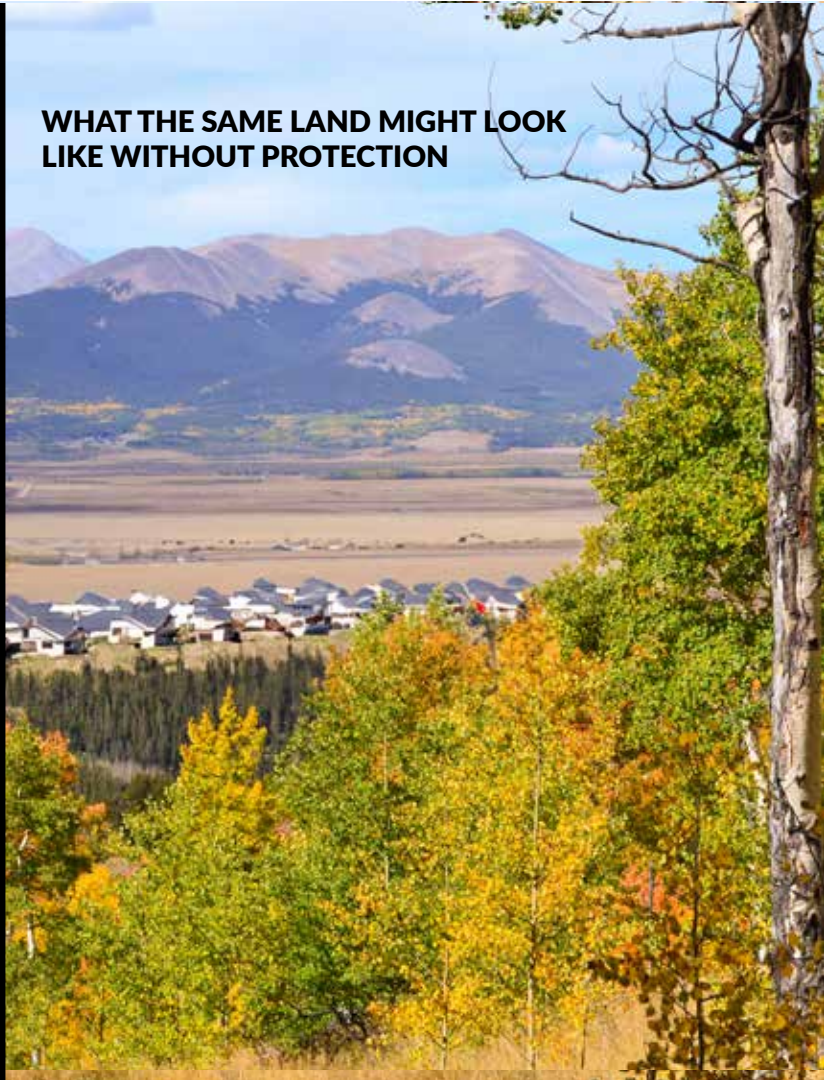
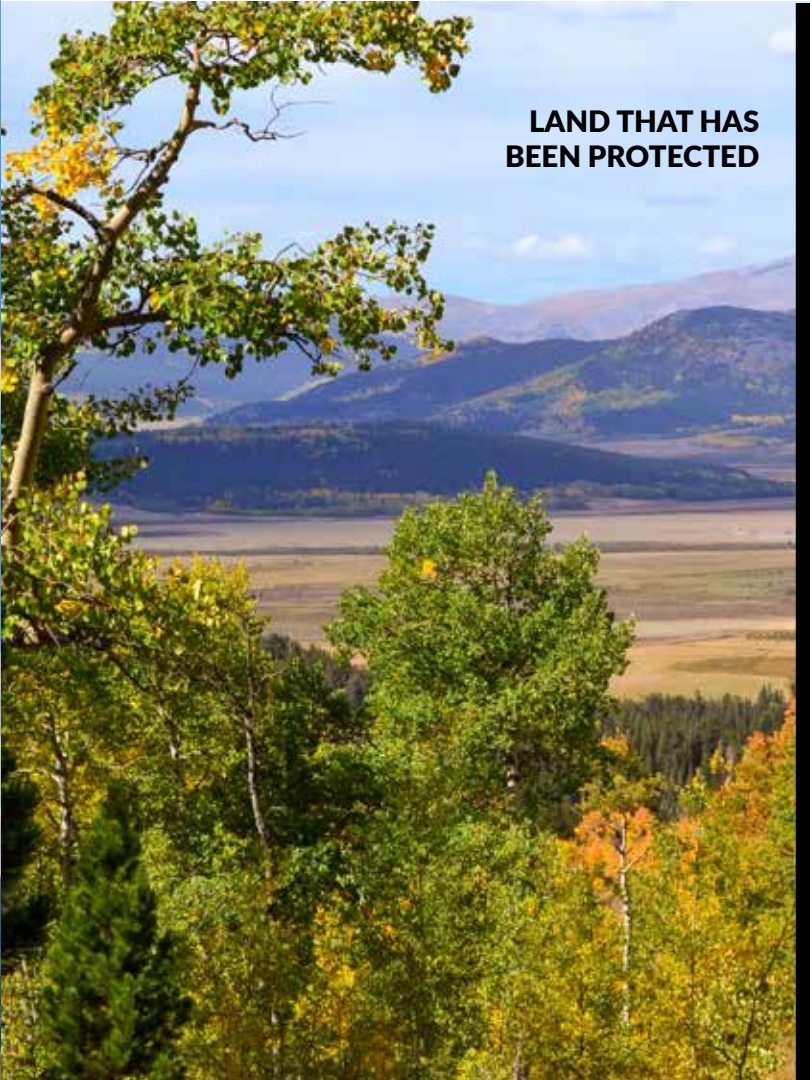
When we report on the impact of our work to people like you who make this possible, sometimes it helps to remind ourselves not only what our conservation projects look like, but also what things could look like if we weren't doing this work.

Conservation protects the landscapes and values of Colorado and honors our working lands and natural resources. In these next few pages, we share some of Colorado's most iconic views and favorite spots that have been positively impacted. In some cases, we show you what might have been, were it not for their protection with Colorado Open Lands.

If some of the examples seem extreme, consider this: A little more than 150 years ago, Denver was a remote outpost in the Kansas territory that some speculated would not survive as a real town. So, while a subdivision

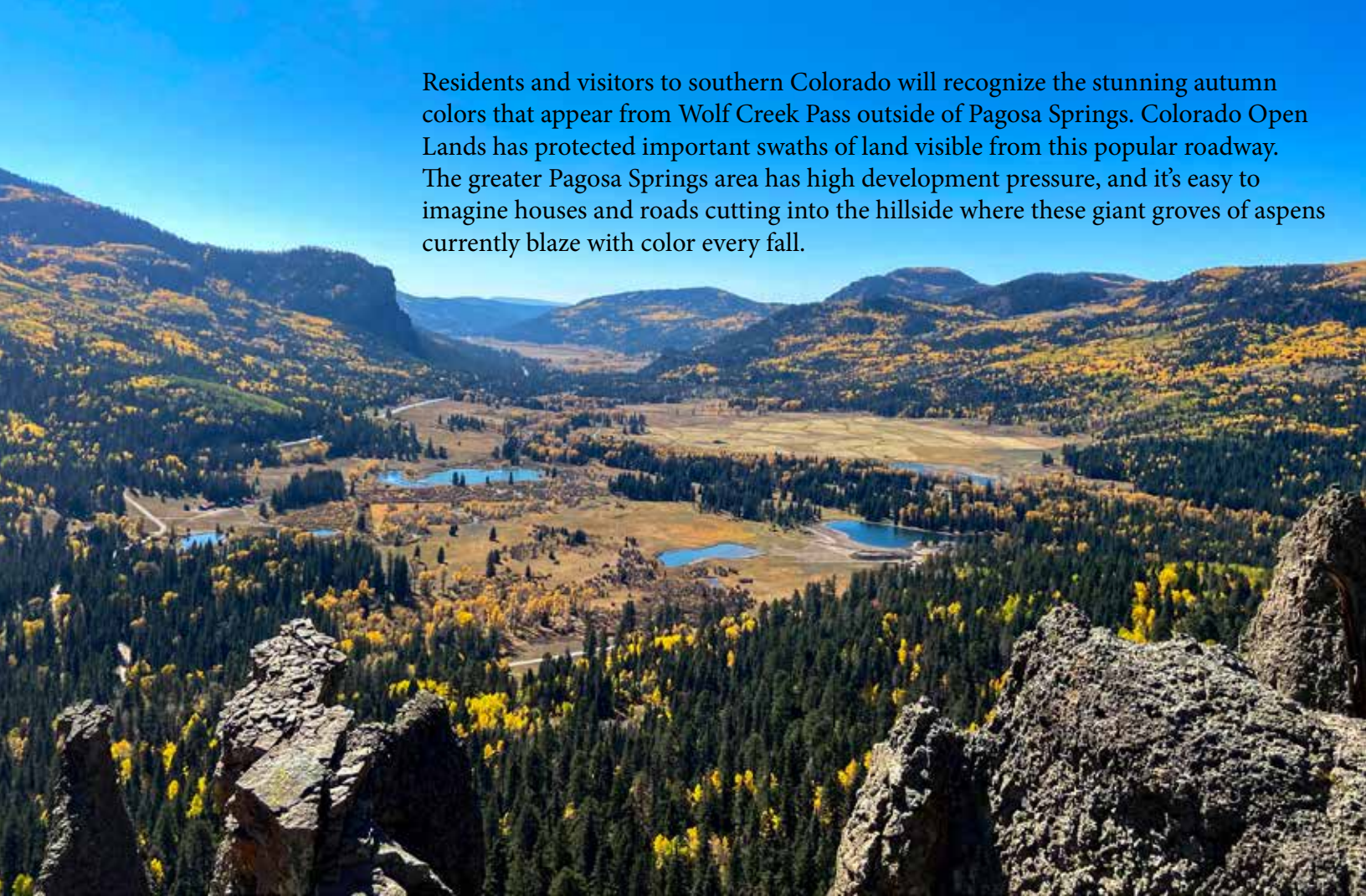
at the base of Kenosha Pass or a hotel against the Sangre de Cristo Mountains seems outlandish today, imagine the impact of the current pace of growth in Colorado 100 years from now. Think about the stories our parents told us about cattle drives through Morrison, camping in the wilds of Lakewood, or driving on dirt roads through what is now the Denver Tech Center. We know that Colorado is growing and changing before our eyes. Our mission is simply to save, and in some cases, improve, some of the best parts before we lose them forever.

We at COL think a lot about what might happen if not for protecting land and water, so we let artificial intelligence technology help us imagine what our state could look like if not for the conservation you help make possible.

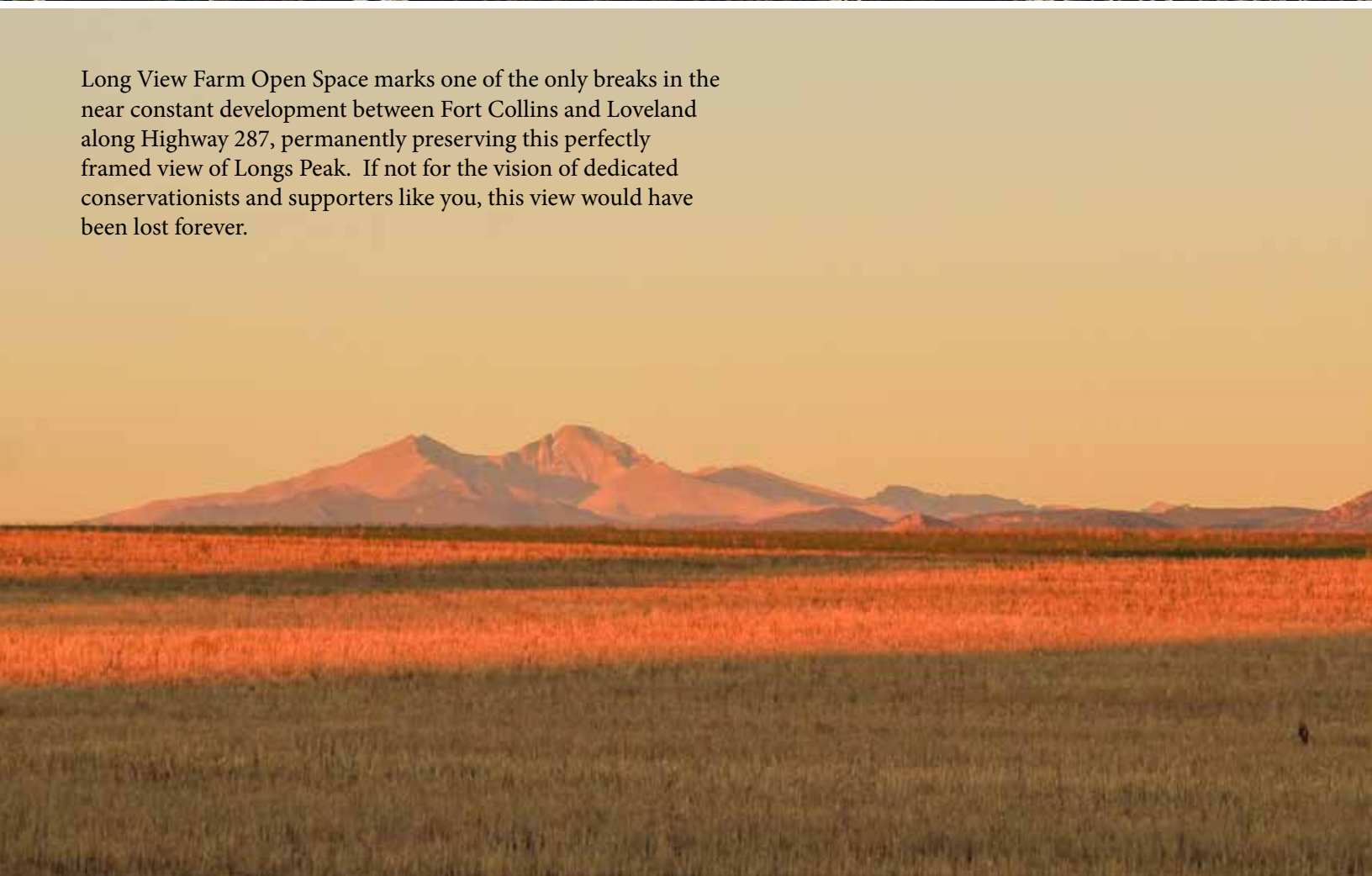


Kenosha Pass in Park County is one of Colorado's most popular and iconic places for leaf peeping. Part of the splendor of the view from that mountain pass is the wide-open rangeland beyond the breathtaking yellow aspen groves. Can you imagine what the view would look like if, instead of cows and barns dotting the landscape, the view was crowded with houses, gas stations, and roadways? Colorado Open Lands has completed 58 conservation projects in Park County alone, protecting almost 31,000 acres, much of it visible from major highways and the Colorado Trail. Those protected lands keep views like this one open forever.

Pictured on this page: Irby Ranch along Highway 50 into Gunnison. Photo by John Fielder.



Residents and visitors to southern Colorado will recognize the stunning autumn colors that appear from Wolf Creek Pass outside of Pagosa Springs. Colorado Open Lands has protected important swaths of land visible from this popular roadway. The greater Pagosa Springs area has high development pressure, and it's easy to imagine houses and roads cutting into the hillside where these giant groves of aspens currently blaze with color every fall.



Long View Farm Open Space marks one of the only breaks in the near constant development between Fort Collins and Loveland along Highway 287, permanently preserving this perfectly framed view of Longs Peak. If not for the vision of dedicated conservationists and supporters like you, this view would have been lost forever.



LAND THAT HAS BEEN PROTECTED



WHAT THE SAME LAND MIGHT LOOK LIKE WITHOUT PROTECTION

The Bluff Park is a critically important part of the Westcliffe community, with a permanently protected view to the wide-open ranches that nestle up to the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range beyond. But originally, the land the Bluff sits on was slated to become a high-rise hotel. If not for the vision and dedication of the local community working with Colorado Open Lands, that iconic view and treasured community gathering place would have been forever lost.

For those who enjoy skiing at Eldora, there is a reason that you don't drive through a vast sea of condominiums and commercial strip malls as you make your way from Nederland. The open space and wildlife corridors that you enjoy are only there because a visionary landowner chose to protect that land with Colorado Open Lands in one of our first successful conservation projects in the state. Today when passing by, you witness forests and wide-open meadows that serve as home to elk, moose, and mountain lion.



Just as a successful conservation project can be “invisible” unless you know what to look for, so can the efforts of a network of critical partners. Success like this relies on willing landowners, expert staff, local government support, community members, and public and private donors. The next time you enjoy one of your favorite Colorado views, think about all that goes into what you *don't* see, and consider joining us in this mission to keep the best views - and everything that comes with them - permanently protected in Colorado.

THE IMPACT OF YOUR GIFT



\$250

Protect five acres of sage-grouse habitat from development.



\$500

Fund one teacher to go through our week-long training on how to teach land and water conservation in a Colorado school.



\$1,000

Fund one young professional in our year-long leadership training program to learn about land and water conservation.



\$2,500

Fund the stewardship and monitoring of five conserved properties for an entire year.



\$5,000

Advance work on new stream or land conservation to improve wildlife habitat for an entire year.



\$150,000

Fund a year of work to conserve land in Northwest Colorado - see more below!

Help continue this record pace of conservation in Colorado by giving today!



GIFTS BY MAIL

Mail a check to Colorado Open Lands at 1546 Cole Boulevard, Suite #200, Lakewood, CO 80401.



CREDIT CARD

Recurring or one-time gifts by credit card can be processed online at www.ColoradoOpenLands.org/donate or by calling us at 303-988-2373.



DONOR ADVISED FUNDS

Don't forget your family's Donor Advised funds! Check with your fund's custodian to make a gift!



GIFTS OF STOCK

Gifts of appreciated stock and/or mutual funds can be a wonderful way to support Colorado Open Lands, while realizing savings on long-term capital gains taxes!



ESTATE PLANNING

By including Colorado Open Lands in your estate and retirement planning, you are making a legacy gift that supports our promise of perpetual land conservation. You may also consider listing COL as a beneficiary on your life insurance policy.

The Impact of your Support in Northwest Colorado

The Bears Ears Elk herd that calls this region home is estimated to be between 23,000-25,000 animals. They are joined by a robust population of mule deer, mountain lion, and black bear. And Northwest Colorado is home to the largest concentration of Gunnison sage-grouse in the world.



Together these create a compelling reason to focus on the protection of open land and habitat in the Northwest region.

There is a historic level of federal funding for land and water conservation that can be leveraged by private philanthropy dollars to achieve significant conservation of wildlife habitat. In many cases, the federal conservation funding that is coming available must be obligated by 2026. In Northwest Colorado, we have a set of key lands that provide a home for this wildlife covering nearly 326,000 acres that would be critical for conservation and qualify for significant federal conservation funding through the conservation programs in the Farm Bill.

Over the coming three years, COL estimates we will need to raise \$450,000, or \$150,000 each year for three years, to leverage these federal funds move this regional project forward.

The impact and leveraging opportunities of this investment will be significant with more land available for conservation in this region than that contained in the entirety of Rocky Mountain National Park. We consider this a generational opportunity to protect significant open lands in Northwest Colorado.

Learn more about ways to give at ColoradoOpenLands.org/Ways-To-Give or contact Elizabeth Silverman at 303.988.2373 ext. 216 or ESilverman@ColoradoOpenLands.org with questions or for routing and account information.

Engaging the Next Generation of Leaders through the Conservation Leadership Series

In addition to our work to protect and steward open land, COL also works to steward the strong conservation ethic in Colorado to ensure future generations understand and value our important natural resources. Among our several programs in this area is the Conservation Leadership Series, or “CLS,” which seeks to engage young professionals to build and expand a conservation ethic in the next generation of leaders. This year we have completed the fifth successful year of this program that connects young leaders with our conservation and restoration work. The CLS experience weaves together a year-long series of briefings, field experiences, and networking opportunities to learn about the issues and complexities of land and water conservation.

By inspiring participants to take a deeper look at Colorado’s land and water challenges and opportunities, they are better able to make informed decisions when acting on environmental challenges across the state. This year, we gathered a cohort of 23 early- to mid-career professionals for nine events, including snowshoeing on protected land in Nederland, exploring a climate research field station in Gunnison, and touring stream restoration sites in South Park. They had the opportunity to learn from one another, Colorado Open Lands staff, and partner organizations, all while engaging in meaningful conversation about land conservation. These two current participants said it best!



“The Conservation Leadership Series (CLS for short) has been a mind-blowing learning opportunity completely unique to COL and has laid the framework for my understanding of the vast world of conservation. I have learned more on a single CLS visit than I learn at a whole conference thanks to this amazing program and the incredibly talented staff at COL! I went into this program with an inkling of knowledge and now I have the ability to confidently educate others about conservation and spread the word about the cutting-edge work that COL is leading. COL is at the forefront of keeping Colorado beautiful, wild, and awe-inspiring for generations to enjoy forever!”

- Ray Winn
County Bicycle and Pedestrian Planner, Arapahoe County

“The Conservation Leadership Series program offers an enriching experience that professionally connects me in the field of conservation but also nurtures the curious, lifelong learner in me as an individual. I get as excited about going on a CLS visit as I did for a field trip day in elementary school. I was brand new to the land of conservation when I started this program. My biggest takeaway is all the work that goes into protecting land in perpetuity. I used to look at conserved spaces that are open to the public passively, assuming it is automatically going to be there because it’s good for everyone, right? I didn’t appreciate the amount of work that a myriad of constituents, from the individual families who are putting easements on their land to the community engagement work that COL does educate to people on this big decision, put in to make sure that these spaces exist. It brings me joy to know how homegrown and community driven the process is to conserve land.”

- Misha Shearer
Community Relations Manager, Outdoor Lab Foundation



Learn more about this important work at coloradoopenlands.org/conservation-leadership-series

Advancing legislation to protect Colorado’s groundwater with Senator Michael Bennet

Each autumn, we celebrate the people that make conservation possible at our signature event, Cheers for Conservation. We also present the George E. Cranmer Award to one deserving individual whose efforts to protect open space will leave a legacy for future generations to enjoy.

This year, we presented the Cranmer Award to Senator Michael Bennet for his unwavering support for land and water conservation, and especially for his leadership in partnering with Colorado Open Lands to develop innovative tools to conserve and protect water in Colorado and the West.

“I want to say what a privilege it is to be working with you, based on the ideas that you came up with to change the Farm Bill so that we have a program for voluntary groundwater conservation that’s much more effective...And we’re going to be able to spread that idea all across the country.” - Senator Michael Bennet

As Congress debates the next Farm Bill, Bennet has championed a model pioneered by Colorado Open Lands to create funding for voluntary groundwater aquifer conservation. As Colorado landowners step up to the challenge of declining groundwater supplies, incentivizing landowners to reduce pumping groundwater will be a key strategy. The Voluntary Groundwater Conservation Act (co-sponsored by Bennet, Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), and Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.)) represents the bipartisan agreement that measures must be taken to protect our water resources.

At our event, Bennet went on to say,

“Colorado has a unique position to lead all 50 states on the question of sustainability. Nobody has the horsepower we have in terms of humans applying themselves to these challenges all across this state, no matter what political party they’re in, and I have no doubt that when all is said and done, working together, we’ll be able to fulfill that vision.”



Announcing the **Evergreen Society**

Your annual gift of \$1,000 makes you a member of this group of Coloradans that demonstrates their continued commitment to protecting land and water!

Membership comes with these benefits:

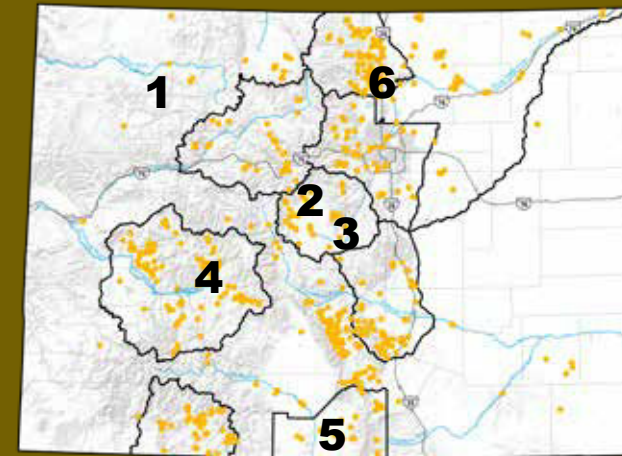
- *An exclusive annual social gathering to update members on our work and meet fellow conservationists in Colorado*
- *Special “insider” newsletter and briefings*
- *Annual Colorado landscape tours to see firsthand the impact you are making*
- *A dedicated COL staff liaison to answer your questions about our work*
- *A COL branded gift to show off your support for protecting open space*



To join today, contact Elizabeth Silverman at
ESilverman@coloradoopenlands.org or 303.988.2373 ext. 216

New Conservation Projects

Six additional permanent conservation successes!



CONTEXT MAP OF NEW PROJECTS

1 - Oak Meadows Ranch

2 - 1Hook Ranch

3 - Gold Nuggets River Ranch

4 - McDermand Ranch

5 - Jacober Ranch

6 - Waggener Farm Phase 3

Oak Meadows Ranch - Moffat & Rio Blanco Counties

Oak Meadows Ranch is south of the City of Craig and northeast of the Town of Meeker. The property is managed as summer grazing ground for cattle by the Steele family, which has been ranching for six generations. Four generations currently help manage the cattle operation.

The 1,721-acre property consists of sagebrush shrublands, montane meadows, and intermountain mixed species forest. Habitat is provided for greater sage-grouse, bald eagle, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, ferruginous hawk, greater sandhill crane, northern leopard frog, elk, moose, mountain lion, and mule deer. Large numbers of elk and mule deer are often present on the property. Oak Meadows Ranch is visible from Moffat County Roads 41 and 45, and from adjacent Bureau of Land Management lands and nearby National Forest Service lands.

Natural Resources Conservation Service was a project partner. Photos by D. Reeder, Rare Earth Science.



Gold Nuggets River Ranch

Park County

Gold Nuggets River Ranch is a 117-acre parcel along Tarryall Creek. It consists of an 80-acre hay meadow with a backdrop of jagged rocks and mountain terrain. The property is situated right below a scenic overlook on County Road 77, offering stunning views of not just the land, but also the elk, moose, mule deer, and bighorn sheep that are often spotted there. The land has been owned and worked by the same family since 1882!

The Park County Land and Water Trust Fund was a project partner.

1Hook Ranch

Park County

This property comprises 256 picturesque acres in northern South Park, with frontage on Highway 285. It features riparian wetlands along Michigan Creek, which crosses the property for 2/3 of a mile. Elk, mule deer, and antelope are often spotted in the meadows, and the wide-open views from the highway are treasured by travelers through South Park.

This conservation easement prevents further growth in an area with significant development pressure due to the easy access from Denver, excellent fishing, and spectacular views.

The Park County Land and Water Trust Fund was a project partner. Photo provided by landowner.



McDermard Ranch - Gunnison County

In 2018, a motivated conservationist purchased 422 acres just north of Gunnison that was adjacent to 108 acres she already owned. The newly purchased land was previously platted for a 12-lot subdivision. Instead of developing the land for a potentially large profit, the buyer purchased the land specifically to remove the subdivision, make the land whole, and conserve all 572 combined acres permanently with COL.

McDermard Ranch consists of irrigated meadows, sagebrush, and over a mile of frontage along Ohio Creek. It is habitat for big game like elk, mule, deer, moose, black bear, and mountain lion, but also for several Colorado Species of Special Concern, including Gunnison sage-grouse, bald eagle, ferruginous hawk, sandhill crane, and northern leopard frog. The property is managed for hay and grazing. Its protection links together two existing conserved properties and adds to the extensive network of conserved and public lands within the incredibly scenic Ohio Creek Valley.

Project partners include Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy and the Gunnison Valley Land Preservation Fund.

Jacober Ranch - Costilla County

The 122-acre Jacober Ranch is visible from the Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway, which meanders through the southern San Luis Valley. This agricultural property consists of irrigated hayfields and pastures with water drawn from the San Acacio Ditch. The ranch's position as one of the last properties irrigated by the San Acacio acequia, one of the most senior water rights in the state, makes it a priority for preservation of water rights upstream along the entire ditch.

The property's irrigated fields and pastures provide scenic enjoyment while also providing habitat and forage for wildlife including elk, mule deer, pronghorn, black bear, mountain lion, and a variety of migratory birds and raptor species. The ranch also provides seasonal habitat for bald eagle and greater sandhill crane, and breeding habitat for northern leopard frog, all Colorado Species of Concern.

Project partners include Great Outdoors Colorado, Natural Resource Conservation Service, the LOR Foundation, and the Trinchera Blanca Foundation.

Waggener Farm Phase 3 - Weld County

The Waggener Farm is an irrigated family farm just outside the town of Berthoud. In addition to conserving significant water rights, conserving Waggener Farm helps to protect the iconic view of Longs Peak and Rocky Mountain National Park on the road into Berthoud.

Phase 3 of this project adds 156 acres to the existing conservation easement, bringing the total to 463 acres. With the additional acreage comes a significant amount of the most senior water rights in Northern Colorado. This easement also includes flexible water-sharing language that allows the landowner to lease some of the water to other local users in dry years. Having access to leasable water relieves pressure on municipalities to "buy and dry" other area farms.



McDermard Ranch



Jacober Ranch



Waggener Farm

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Any amount you can invest monthly will help protect the land and water of Colorado for both people and wildlife! Learn more about program benefits and sign up today at coloradoopenlands.org/monthly-giving or by scanning the QR code here.

