



# SPRING 2022 NEWSLETTER

**FEATURING:**

**AN EXPANSION OF OUR  
LAND & WATER  
RESTORATION WORK**

**OUR MERGER WITH SAN ISABEL  
LAND PROTECTION TRUST  
NEW CONSERVATION SUCSESSES  
AND MORE!**



# Introducing new faces at COL

Longtime subscribers to this publication know that we have a waiting list of conservation work that is over 100 projects long. We've told you about our capacity campaign that was directed toward expanding our staff to help these waiting landowners achieve their goals for conserving their properties. We're so pleased to share with you that, since our last newsletter, we have added these five positions to help us do just that!



## **CHELSEA COLLINS** STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM MANAGER

“As a new member of COL’s Stewardship team, I’m thrilled to help monitor our nearly 700 easements and to be part of an organization that values the connections between people and the land. I can’t wait to begin exploring those relationships and to help preserve Colorado’s natural beauty through innovative and sustainable stewardship!”

## **KAREN FOLEY** LAND AND WATER STEWARD

“I am so excited to join Colorado Open Lands’ stewardship team as part of the merger with San Isabel Land Protection Trust. With COL’s resources and support, conservation efforts in the Wet Mountain Valley will begin anew and landowners can get more of the attention they need and deserve. I look forward to serving this community for many years!”



## **KELSEY KING** GREAT OUTDOORS COLORADO CONSERVATION FELLOW

“When I graduated from Colorado State University, I remember my esteemed professor telling me to “go, go to the mountains and get their good tidings. Ramble out over yonder and lose yourself in the adventure and beauty of it all, and then come back. Come back and fight for the land, protect it and care for it so that our children’s children get to do the same.” I took his words to heart; I explored, learned, and grew in nature, and I feel as though I am truly back. Back to do this good work at COL and work hard to protect what I have come to love most, the land!”

## **JENN MURDOCK** GIS MANAGER

“Expansive urbanization of my hometown in Colorado’s rural eastern plains compelled me to study environmental science and economics to further understand human-environment interactions. I researched a myriad of conservation-focused topics using geographic information science methods—including studying impacts of natural disasters on freshwater resources and infrastructure, modeling revegetation following large forest fires in Colorado, and estimating the economic impact of dwindling snowpack on mountain communities. I am excited to use my skills in GIS and mapping to support COL’s mission.”



## **IAN NAWALINSKI** DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE

“As an East Coast transplant, what brought me to Colorado was my love of the outdoors and my passion for conservation. What excites me most about working for COL is the opportunity to give back to the community that I now call home and to protect these places for future generations.”

Dear Friends,

As we plan to celebrate our 40th anniversary at Colorado Open Lands with our upcoming For the Love of Land gala this May, it is rewarding to look back on the decades of accomplishments we have experienced in land and water conservation in Colorado. Nearly 640,000 acres of open and working lands conserved in 50 different counties in Colorado. Fifty careers in conservation launched through our Conservation Fellowship program. Nearly 3,500 miles of streams and rivers conserved. These are wonderful accomplishments to celebrate, but for us here at COL, the more important question is "What's next?"



We continue to accelerate our pace of conservation by advancing more than 100 conservation projects that make up an additional 200,000 acres of open space. However, we are also expanding work that we have been modeling for several years — a comprehensive, statewide land and water restoration initiative focused on improving the forests, grasslands, streams, and wetlands on all of those conserved acres.

Simply put, we have decided that it is not enough just to protect open and working lands. We also have an opportunity and responsibility to improve them.

Colorado is going through historic changes right before our eyes. Massive tracts of land are continuing to be converted to development. Historic forest fires are changing the landscape. Climate change is impacting our snowpack and the way streams and rivers behave. Our demand for water is straining our wildlife and our traditional food production. We have to learn to adapt and address these changes to help our lands and waters become more resilient. I believe our restoration initiative will do just that.

Enjoy reading about this new work, along with several new land conservation projects and an exciting merger between Colorado Open Lands and San Isabel Land Protection Trust. And thank you for all you do to help protect this beautiful place we call home!

Sincerely,

Tony Caligiuri  
President and CEO

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

<b>Improving Land, Improving Lives</b>	<b>4-9</b>
<b>More than Just Recreation</b>	<b>10-11</b>
<b>Our Merger with San Isabel Land Protection Trust</b>	<b>12-13</b>
<b>New Conservation Projects</b>	<b>15</b>



# Improving Land, Improving Lives:

Restoring and enhancing conserved lands to support wildlife, plants, and people

*Newly created ponds attract waterfowl on Yahn Ranch in Sterling*

Jim Yahn takes in the expansive view of his cattle ranch near Sterling, Colorado. “Twenty years ago when my wife and I bought this place, we thought it was beautiful. We were excited about it as it was, but we could see there were ways we could make it even better,” he says. The land lies near the Lower South Platte River and Sterling Reservoir and now provides prime roosting and feeding spots for ducks and other waterfowl. But until recently, they’d been scarce. “We would have geese once in a while, but we rarely saw ducks,” Jim says.

Since 2020, however, the ducks have flocked to Yahn Ranch by the hundreds. In a partnership with Ducks Unlimited, Colorado Open Lands has completed improvements to the wetlands on Yahn Ranch, creating shallow water ponds that are attractive to waterfowl for roosting. “There are a lot of different species of ducks here. We’ve seen sandhill cranes, blue herons, even some raptors - hawks and eagles. We’ve seen a wide variety of waterfowl,” says Jim.

Yahn Ranch is just one example of land restoration or improvement we’ve completed in the past. Colorado Open Lands is now poised to expand our impacts in restoring and improving more land in Colorado to the benefit of wildlife, of our lands and water, and a for more resilient future.

## The Need for This Work

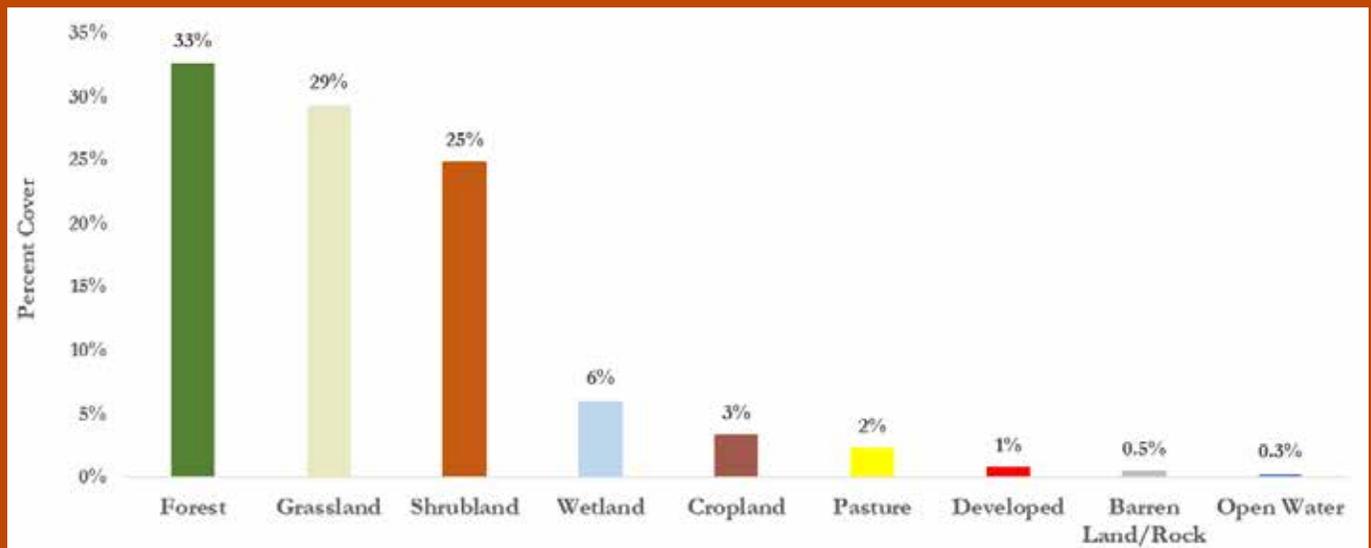
At COL we understand that it’s not enough to conserve land – we must act to restore and steward our land and water for a future where we flourish together. COL’s sense of responsibility to be a leader in land and water restoration is at the heart of this work.

## Wetlands are less than 2% of Colorado's landscape but provide benefits to over 75% of Colorado's wildlife species.

As we look toward having a significant impact on our land and water resources through restoration, we must take a comprehensive view of the challenge. Nature has no sense of public-private property boundaries. Likewise, restoration work does not occur in a vacuum. Private conserved lands are often the bridges between public lands. A migrating elk herd moving through a national forest does not stop for a No Trespassing sign and turn around. As human pressure on popular recreation areas intensifies, the animals that live there are being forced onto private lands where their encounters with humans are fewer.

It's difficult for landowners to take on large-scale restoration work on their own. COL offers a partnership, a knowledge base, and access to resources. Funding is often a significant hurdle for private landowners. COL has been fortunate to receive support from a variety of public funders, including the Park County Land and Water Trust Fund, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Colorado Water Conservation Board, US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Great Outdoors Colorado. Each of these public funding sources provides resources to assist landowners in restoring the land. While public funding sources are critical, they often require private matching funds and a not-for-profit partner to unlock the funds. COL takes on that role for landowners, making these restoration projects possible.

### COL Landscapes: Land Cover Distribution



Colorado Open Lands stewards conservation easements on hundreds of thousands of acres of land covering a range of environments in Colorado. Healthy and resilient landscapes do important work for our communities when allowed to fulfill their natural functions. Important processes are constantly happening all around us on the land, contributing to environmental sustainability, strong communities, and our own wellness.

Well-managed grasslands and pastures can restore healthy soils, reduce pests, and disperse seeds of native plants. Healthy forests grow food and materials, clean the air, and provide opportunities for recreation, education, and cultural enrichment. Wild and restored wetlands sustain biodiversity, create freshwater storage, and prevent floods. All of this land cover can also help extract carbon from the air and re-bury it in the ground to curtail climate change.

Jim says, “There are entities out there like Colorado Open Lands, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and Ducks Unlimited that will work together to help and make it easy to make a big improvement for wildlife. You can create it in a way that not only will the wildlife benefit but the rancher himself will benefit like I did. You work in a collaborative process with several entities that have the same goal and you all realize the benefits. It’s a win-win.”

## Our Restoration Methods

When restoration treatments are crafted, the benefits multiply throughout the landscape over time. For instance, at the headwaters of the South Platte River, restoration treatments that COL and our partners have worked on have slowed down the waterways allowing the water to spread out and stay on the land longer. This helps mitigate wildfire and floods, two of Colorado’s most pressing climate concerns.

These stream and wetland treatments also create clean water and great habitat for all sorts of critters. Not surprisingly, wetlands are important for pollinators like bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. Where there are thriving wetlands, there are often more productive and resilient farms as well.

There is also great restoration potential in grasslands and pastures. Collecting native seeds locally and helping them to spread can go a long way for grassland and pasture health. Even small pockets of healthy grassland have enormous benefits for pollinators, birds, and small mammals.





Process-based restoration focuses on low-tech treatments that lead to healthy riverscapes. Employing low-tech solutions makes use of existing materials onsite to ensure viability and ensures the cost-effectiveness of the treatments. For example, in wetlands and along small streams, we often harvest local willow cuttings and weave them into the fabric of our treatments to help spread water out and slow its pace through the land. The willows respond well to harvesting, growing back quickly. Using local materials and working with natural processes encourages wildlife to be our partner in these efforts. Another common low-tech treatment is adding wood to streams and rivers. Wood can help to stabilize stream banks and provides desirable habitat for a breadth of critters like fish, birds, and bugs. The land provides all the materials we need for restoration. We can learn from the flora and fauna. We just need to have the humility and awareness to look and listen to the land.

COL's overarching philosophy is a restorative land ethic. We recognize multiple ways of knowing and accepting the land as a community to which we belong. As we collect information at various phases of a project, we allow this information to guide the work. As change is constant, restoration is a forever-evolving process,

## Another way we help improve land



COL is leading the way in unique land improvement strategies. In the last two years, we've completed three mitigation bank conservation projects. One exists on the Lower South Platte and requires restoration work on the river to offset impacts from developers whose projects have effected the river elsewhere. We have also completed a species conservation bank, which protects and improves habitat for the Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse, a species classified as Threatened by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Adding projects like these to more familiar forms of restoration work multiply the effects for a better and more sustainable outcome.

never finished. This learn-as-we-go approach allows us to remain nimble and adapt as needed, making the treatments more effective and cultivating land that is more productive and able to withstand change. As practitioners, we are seeking to understand the land and preserve its ability for self-renewal.

## Next Steps

After designing and completing selected restoration projects over the past several years, we are on the precipice of expanding our pilot work into a landscape-scale program that will make a measurable difference in Colorado's ecosystem health. Together with our partners, we are developing tools to prioritize restoration opportunities at broader scales and in different landscapes. While individual projects are important, intentionally engaging in restoration across landscapes is critical – creating a constellation of restoration sites helps each individual project support the others and promotes landscape resiliency.

COL is also building a strong network of practitioners, scientists, and conservation-minded folks who share our restoration ethic. Beyond the tangible benefits for communities that make up “the land” — humans, plants,

## Incorporating habitat and wetland research into our work

**In addition to on-the-ground restoration projects, Colorado Open Lands also supports ecology research with Colorado State University through the Colorado Parks and Wildlife “Wetlands for Wildlife” program. Read on for two Ph.D. candidates' current research projects funded by COL.**



**Sarah Hinshaw, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Geosciences**

Stream restoration has a variety of benefits for humans and habitats, but it also has potential to store carbon and help fight climate change. I study rivers and floodplains across the American West that have undergone restoration, and I measure how much carbon is stored in restored floodplains. By comparing carbon content in stream restoration projects to heavily degraded floodplains and healthy floodplains, I can estimate the carbon storage potential of stream restoration.

Stream restoration can help mitigate climate change, and right now more than ever, we need to prepare for the future climate. Dry, wide floodplains with incised streams are great opportunities to store carbon through restoration. Plus, river restoration helps create more beautiful, rich, diverse, balanced, and sustainable landscapes. Ideally, if we can predict how much carbon can be stored by stream restoration, we can think about merging carbon markets with stream restoration. Private landowners, ranchers, or anyone restoring streams on their land could benefit from carbon credits

while improving habitat, forage, and water quality all at the same time.

If I could impart any advice to your audiences, it would be to help save the beavers! Beavers were almost pushed to extinction in Colorado during the fur trade, however, they used to be an abundant and essential component of our ecosystems! They're back now, although not nearly as plentiful, and it's time to learn to coexist. Beavers are hugely beneficial for ecosystems, and beaver meadows can even act as fire breaks. Beaver

wildlife, water, and soil — our hope for this work is that it fosters understanding and respect in the Coloradans it touches. As community members of the land, we have the opportunity to treat the land frugally, and skillfully, and use the land with affection.

Even if you never visit the headwaters of the South Platte west of South Park, you might see ducks fly overhead at your local park and understand what made their local habitat possible. When the next inevitable wildfire doesn't spread quite as far, you can ponder if the work to improve streams has kept the ground damp enough to slow down the blaze. The next time you visit rural Colorado, if it seems a little extra green, you can know that someone like you cared to take the time and resources to help it become or stay that way.

As Jim Yahn concludes, “in an area that has irrigated agriculture, there's a lot of opportunity for projects like this. With just a few changes or enhancement you can make it pretty spectacular for future generations. That's what's exciting. I just had a grandson and as he grows up he can come here and enjoy the things that we have worked for together. When you think of all these entities putting funding, time, and effort into doing this, and you think of the benefits that future generations are going to realize, it's exciting.”

complexes can reduce flood damage, improve water quality, provide fish habitat, and increase biodiversity. In general, beaver create resiliency against disturbances we will face more frequently as the climate shifts—drought, fire, and flood. In many cases, solutions as simple as pond levelers or wire mesh around desirable trees can help beavers and humans share space, while supporting healthy and diverse rivers and floodplains.



**Emily Iskin, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Geosciences**

I am studying floodplain differences for a wide range of natural rivers in the United States. The results of this research will be applicable to many river corridors due to the choice of sites that span much of the regional diversity of floodplain rivers in the United States. My research spans rivers that occupy three drainage areas, three flow types (snowmelt, snow/rain, rainfall), four river shapes (straight, braided, anastomosing, meandering), and three biomes (conifer forest, grassland prairie, and beaver meadow). Relating these potential control variables to metrics of floodplain diversity will give us a detailed understanding that can be used to inform river corridor restoration.

This research includes 21 study reaches on 14 river floodplains all over the United States. This broad scale will expand the field of floodplain research and can inform adaptive river management implemented by public and private practitioners by identifying processes that create and maintain floodplain diversity.

I think Colorado has an opportunity to restore some natural floodplain function by reconnecting rivers to their floodplains. Floodplains store and exchange water, sediment, wood, particulate organic matter, and organisms with rivers and the surrounding environment. When rivers and floodplains are reallocated to interact, they work together to create resilient riparian habitat.

Communicating what natural rivers look like and experiencing them in the wild are core components for building community support and buy-in for restoration projects. I hope to expand our knowledge on what natural floodplain rivers look like to increase regional awareness and motivation for protecting them.

# More than just recreation: Connecting people to the outdoors builds enduring support for conservation

As winter turns to spring and the snow on the mountains melts into Colorado's headwaters, anglers from across the state emerge from hibernation to flock to their favorite fishing destinations. Access to open space and recreation is an essential driver of conservation and contributes greatly to our quality of life as Coloradans. That's one reason why the state's land trusts have protected 2,236 miles of Colorado waterways. Laid end to end, that would exceed the driving distance from Denver to Boston. In honor of a new season of recreation, we asked members of our community to share their love of fishing and explain in their own words why it's so important to conserve these lands and our most precious resource: water.

"Fishing to me is akin to a spiritual experience," says Wendell Fleming, pictured at right alongside her husband Stephen Cunningham. "When I stand in a mountain river, feeling the cool water rush by while I breathe in the fresh mountain air, I forget all my cares. I am utterly present. I feel one with nature and the beauty around me. Anyone who loves to fish loves the rivers and streams that we are privileged to have access to. If we love it, we have a responsibility to protect it."

For many in our community, fishing is more than recreation. They see it as escape. "The real reason to fish is to get away from the daily grind of life...this allows you to totally relax," says Jackson Streit.

"Figuring out how to find and catch fish in new places is a glorious challenge to conquer," says Dr. Don

Aptekar. "Every fishing excursion is its own poignant memory. It can be meaningful to be alone with the river even if you don't catch any fish. There is nothing better than going to sleep listening to the sound of a river!"

Kim Dufty perfectly summarized the angler's experience: "Escape, explore, challenge, beauty."

Access to fresh water in the American West is becoming scarcer by the day. Land conservation is a powerful tool to protect our water and keep it in Colorado. We asked our community about what they believe connects fishing and conservation.

"You have to enter the natural world to fool a fish. You have to become part of it. Recognize it, read it, deal with the natural world," says Brian Spear. "The fishing that makes Colorado so great is immersing yourself in the natural world. The two cannot be separated. The landscapes; the flowing, cold clear water; all those things are interrelated. If you take the natural conserved world away, you don't have the real Colorado experience."

The Colorado experience is something we all hold close to our hearts. It's what inspires us to protect our waterways and open lands. Our community shared their thoughts about how Colorado would be different without clean or abundant drinking water.

"It's already happening on the Grand Mesa. Lakes and reservoirs haven't been full for years. Muddy



shores make access difficult. Vegetation on the surface makes fishing a challenge and creates a habitat issue (warming) for fish,” explains Kim Dufty. **“Water is the key to life.** Healthy riparian zones equal healthy habitat and vice versa. Lack of cold, clean water will and has led to degradation of the watershed, almost cascading failure.”

Jackson Streit put it in simpler terms: “If there is no conservation of the outdoors you love, ultimately there won’t be any outdoor activities to enjoy in the future. To protect our clean waters in Colorado, it is

paramount that we as stewards of the land invest time and money with all of the conservation groups that are working to protect the things we love to do outdoors.”

“Clean water is necessary for life and everything we enjoy in Colorado,” says Dr. Don Aptekar.

When we protect the lands that surround the water, the water stays where we need it, to live, work, and play. Whether you’re an angler, a farmer, or a hiker, it is our responsibility to protect these lands and waterways, for now and for future generations.



## The Next Generation

Peter Carpenter, 19

“ I was 7 years old when my Grandpa and Dad gave me my first casting lesson in Carbondale, CO. Under the guidance of two generations of excellent teachers, I learned the basics of casting and hooking a fish on the small tributaries and ponds off of the Roaring Fork River. Even today, I hear my Grandpa calling out the cadence as I cast: 10 o’clock, pause...1 o’clock, pause... Since those first formative years, my Grandpa, Dad, and I have been on numerous adventures together, and fly fishing remains a way to connect with my family in the outdoors.

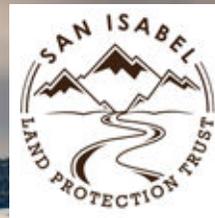
For me, fly fishing is tapping into the balance of life through mindfulness and observation. To truly fly fish is to interact with nature to its fullest extent. From the massive Colorado River to the tiniest of mountain streams, no fly fishing trip would be complete without the raw beauty of the environments that I have grown up in.

To best protect clean water for future generations, I believe we need to first introduce those generations by giving them access to this water. Studies have shown that being in nature has had measurable effects on happiness, and the pandemic provided more than enough empirical evidence for this assertion. If we can introduce people to the beneficial effects of being outside, I believe that they will be more willing to protect the outdoors as well.

I believe that recreation and stewardship must go hand-in-hand. The stream where I learned to fish is now so overrun with algae that it is extremely difficult to fish. Clear Creek has been tainted with heavy metals, stunting the growth of the trout in that fishery. On the Madison River in Montana, rising air temperatures have caused consistent Hoot Owl restrictions. Fishing has brought me incredible moments of happiness and connection to our great outdoors, and as such I feel a moral responsibility to protect these lands and the species that inhabit them.

”

# Welcoming San Isabel Land Protection Trust to Colorado Open Lands



*Music Meadows Ranch, originally protected by SILPT, now permanently protected with COL. Photo by Dan Ballard*

Colorado Open Lands and San Isabel Land Protection Trust have merged our operations, effective December 31, 2021. Our two organizations share a passion for the permanent protection of Colorado’s wild and working lands.

Larry Vickerman, who served as president of the San Isabel Land Protection Trust Board of Directors, said, “I am very excited that the properties San Isabel has protected over the past 26 years will now become part of Colorado Open Lands’ portfolio. COL has the staff expertise, resources, and statewide perspective to bring an abundance of new opportunities to the landowners in our service area and to enhance the pace, scope, and efficiency of conservation in our region. More than 10,000 acres in our region are poised for protection through conservation easements.”

San Isabel brought a rich history of successful land protection. It was founded in 1995 by a group of Custer County residents concerned about increasing development pressures and the potential loss of agricultural lands, scenic vistas, and wildlife habitat. Since that time, San Isabel permanently protected 42,434 acres in Custer, Fremont, Huerfano, and Pueblo counties through partnerships with more than 120 landowners and families.

Colorado Open Lands President and CEO Tony Caligiuri said, “COL is honored to inherit the relationships and interests of the conservation community in the San Isabel region and to facilitate continued stewardship of the landscapes San Isabel has worked to protect. The staff of both land trusts hope to advance conservation in the region, with a waiting list of landowners interested in pursuing land preservation and restoration projects.”

COL has kept an office and full-time staff in Westcliffe, San Isabel’s home base. Larry Vickerman has been elected to a seat on COL’s Board of Directors, and COL has established a local advisory board in the San Isabel region to provide area expertise and community connection going forward.

Legal and administrative costs for this merger were supported by a variety of public and private sources, including a fundraising campaign, “Keeping the Promise,” and a Great Outdoors Colorado - GOCO Resilient Communities grant.

Paul Phillips, COL Board Chair, said, “San Isabel had become one of the premier land trusts in the West, having preserved more than 42,000 acres of iconic open lands, thanks to the dedication and generosity of its terrific board, staff, and supporters. I am enormously excited by the merger of San Isabel and COL, which creates a true conservation



*The Bluff Park, previously established by SILPT and under easement with COL. Photo by Bill Gillette.*

powerhouse, with even greater capacity to serve present and future Coloradans by preserving the most precious remaining lands, waters, and habitat throughout our beautiful state.”

The two organizations have a long history of collaborating, including on the Bluff Park in Westcliffe. San Isabel partnered with COL to put a conservation easement on its 5-acre parcel at the park, restricting its future use to recreation for the enjoyment of residents and visitors. The easement also permanently preserves the uninterrupted, stunning view of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

COL Board member Sandy Guerrieri added, “It is stunning to stand at the edge of Westcliffe and experience the expansive view of the Sangre de Cristos as they rise above the productive agricultural grass lands of the valley bottom. Living and ranching in Gunnison, I realize that Gunnison and Westcliffe have issues in common: an agricultural community facing pressures of new population growth and increasing recreational use, as well as pressure on their water resources. The merger will only strengthen these two organizations in their mission of conserving lands.”

San Isabel was founded by grassroots volunteers concerned about growth coming to the Wet Mountain Valley. The founding board was made up of self-described environmentalists and ranchers, educators, businesspeople, and artists who saw the intrinsic value and beauty in the landscape and had the foresight to preserve it. They did so through cultivating community connections, careful stewardship, and fun community events. Colorado Open Lands is honored to continue this legacy of excellence in land and water conservation in the Wet Mountain Valley and beyond.

*Board and staff members of SILPT and COL at SILPT’s annual Beers ‘n Brats BBQ. Photo by Greg Smith.*



# For Love of the Land



**TUESDAY EVENING, MAY 17, 2022**

## CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF LAND CONSERVATION

For Love of the Land is Colorado Open Lands' premier annual celebration of those who care about land conservation in Colorado.

Featuring **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

*Learn more at [ColoradoOpenLands.org/The-Q-for-Conservation](https://ColoradoOpenLands.org/The-Q-for-Conservation). Contact Alyssa Acosta at 303-988-2373 x216 or [AAcosta@ColoradoOpenLands.org](mailto:AAcosta@ColoradoOpenLands.org) with questions or to learn more about sponsorship opportunities.*



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# New Conservation Projects



## Fresh Tracks – Baca County

We have once again partnered with the Southern Plains Land Trust (SPLT) to add additional protections on the shortgrass prairie of southeast Colorado with the Fresh Tracks Preserve! SPLT’s mission is to preserve these lands for the native species – both plant and animal – that thrive on them. The Fresh Tracks easement combines several parcels owned by SPLT into one 2,559-acre addition to their wildlife preserve holdings. It also represents COL’s first easement in Baca County, bringing our total counties served to 50 out of 64!

Fresh Tracks (pictured above) is home to species great and small, including mountain lion, mule deer, pronghorn, Colorado Species of Special Concern ferruginous hawk and swift fox, and Colorado Threatened Species burrowing owl, as well as the rare Colorado green gentian plant.

## Waggener Farm – Weld County

Waggener Farm is located between I-25 and the Town of Berthoud, a fast-growing area with high development pressure. Now this productive farm will forever contribute to the scenic gateway into Berthoud, preserving the viewshed to Long’s Peak and Twin Sisters. Waggener Farm is a fifth generation farm with prime soils that produce corn, alfalfa, barley, and grass mixes. The farm is currently being leased by Root Shoot Malting, one of Colorado’s premier craft malt producers. This conservation project represents the first of three phases that will ultimately protect 483 acres of the farm. COL thanks the Waggener family for their long history of conservation, including the Waggener Farm Park, first protected in 2006!



## Wegert Property – Gunnison County

Finally, the 122-acre Wegert Property is located in the City of Gunnison and provides an important open-space buffer for adjacent public open space properties that include an active Gunnison Sage-grouse “lek,” the term for the area in which animals engage in courtship displays. The land consists of sagebrush shrublands, irrigated meadows, and riparian habitat along nearly a mile of Antelope Creek. Habitat is also provided for bald eagle, ferruginous hawk, greater sandhill crane, northern leopard frog, bighorn sheep, black bear, elk, mountain lion, and mule deer. The Wegerts reside on the property and manage it for hay production and livestock grazing. The easement was supported by Natural Resources Conservation Service and Gunnison Valley Land Preservation Fund, and was completed in partnership with Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy.

*Waggener Farm (above) and Wegert Property (below)*



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In case you missed it: National Geographic Magazine recently covered Colorado Open Lands' work to protect the lands and waters of Colorado's San Luis Valley! Scan the QR code to go directly to the article.

