



COLORADO WEST LAND TRUST

Conserving Land.
Connecting People.
Enriching Lives.

Snooks Bottom, Fruita. Photo by Johnny Moir

Thank you to our Lead Underwriters for sponsoring this publication



Alpine Bank



OUR MISSION

To protect and enhance agricultural land, wildlife habitat and scenic lands in western Colorado to benefit the community at large, enrich lives, provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, and ensure our connection to land for generations to come.

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Conserving Land. Connecting People. Enriching Lives.



COLORADO WEST
LAND TRUST

DEAR FRIENDS,

What is your vision for the future of Western Colorado? Does it include verdant valleys that support thriving herds of elk and deer? How about beautiful, agricultural landscapes that produce a harvest bounty of peaches, sweet corn, peppers, and tomatoes? Or, green pastures with cattle, horses and sheep grazing peacefully? And families able to pursue life and prosper in a rural agricultural setting? Do you foresee networks of open land whose trails connect neighborhoods to natural areas? Does the picture include healthy stream and river corridors teeming with fish and wildlife, providing cool respite on a hot July day?

A projected 300,000 new residents will transform Western Colorado in the coming decades. Yet, we have the opportunity now to create the future we hope for. As we welcome new neighbors, we must work together to conserve the most important lands across the region. What we pass down to our grandchildren and their children will

be shaped by the actions we take to protect those places today.

We know that conservation unites and inspires us. Regardless of your political persuasion, to live in Western Colorado is to love the landscapes around us. Our challenge is to turn this shared value into effective action.

We have a great foundation to build on. In partnership with hundreds of families, Colorado West Land Trust has conserved over 120,000 acres across a region that stretches from the San Juan Mountains to the Bookcliffs, from the state line to Blue Mesa Reservoir. This total will grow as we continue to conserve critical lands.

I encourage you to learn more about the Land Trust in the pages that follow. You'll see how our work adds to our quality of life, supports our economy, and helps connect us to the lands we love.

And we invite you to support our work to ensure a bright future for the West Slope.

Warm Regards,

Chuck McDaniel
Board President

Rob Bleiberg
Executive Director



Current and former board members gathered for lunch at Peachfork Orchards for the annual Luminaries Luncheon. Front row left to right: Herman Allmaras, John Butler, Doris Butler, Bonnie Talbott, Harry Talbott, Jane Wood, Ivan Wood. Second row left to right: Margery Fillinger, Laurian Unnevehr, Nancy Ellyson, Barb Chamberlin, Miffie (Miriam) Blozovich, Nancy Wilson, Belle Chesnick, Zach Eyer, Steph Durno, Tinker Barnett (Barney Barnett). Back row left to right: Janine Rider, Bill Prakken, Lee Ambrose, John Pabst, Jane Quimby, Chris Muhr, Mike Mechau, Van Graham, George Callison, Steve McCall.

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Land Trust Partnership: One Year Later

Collaboration & consolidation increases capacity to conserve lands

By Sharon Sullivan

Mesa and Black Canyon Regional land trusts began operating under a new name a year ago — Colorado West Land Trust — joining forces to better protect and enhance agricultural land, wildlife habitat and scenic lands in western Colorado.

The collaboration has been a wonderful success, with important properties conserved in Mesa, Ouray, San Miguel, Gunnison and Delta counties, said CWLTL executive director Rob Bleiberg.

A 200-acre easement in the valley between Ouray and Ridgway conserved magnificent wildlife habitat. Visible from the San Juan Scenic Byway, the property also boasts spectacular views of agricultural land surrounded by steep, vegetated slopes, Bleiberg noted.

Another beautiful landscape was preserved along the West Elk Scenic Byway on the north side of Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park.

In the Grand Valley, Clare and Roblee Talbott, owners of C & R Farms, conserved a 22-acre peach orchard — forever protecting precious farmland on East Orchard Mesa. The project is part of the Land Trust's Fruitlands Forever Initiative, a landowner-driven effort that aims to preserve a critical mass of ag land necessary to sustain a fruit industry indefinitely.

New projects in the works include ranchland in Mesa



and Delta counties; a scenic farm with a great riparian area in Montrose County; and a portion of Cimarron Valley in Montrose County.

Operating under one umbrella as Colorado West Land Trust allows the organization to further its reach on the Western Slope.

"We're strengthening existing partnerships and building new relationships across the region — landowners, local governments, government agencies, other nonprofits, community organizations," Bleiberg said. "These will help better serve the region and conserve our incredible

Colorado West Land Trust staff from left to right: Diana Cort, Rob Bleiberg, Libby Collins, Ilana Moir, Mary Hughes, Julie Barger, Jeremy Puckett, Allison Rehor, and Dillon Robertson.

landscapes."

"We're also setting up regional advisory committees to help us better understand and serve various parts of our large, diverse region," Bleiberg said. "We'll add more board members from across the region as well."

State demographers project an influx of 300,000 people moving to the Western Slope in the next 20 years, which has created "a heightened sense of urgency for our work," Bleiberg said.

While Bleiberg noted that growth can be positive for the region, it's also important to preserve what draws people to Colorado — its wild and scenic landscapes.

"We can protect our most important habitat, scenery, and most productive farmland while welcoming thousands of new people to our community," Bleiberg said. "Beautiful landscapes are more than just pretty places — they're critical to our economy and our future." ♦



Ensuring the Future of Farming

By Elaine Matthews

In 1979, Rob and Clare Talbott purchased their first orchard in Palisade, with the hope of relocating from Golden to farm full time. Four decades later, they've not only achieved their goal, they've also helped ensure that others can follow their footsteps.

"It was working for my cousin, Harry Talbott, in 1979 that got me interested in orchards," Rob Talbott said.

Gradually Rob and Clare added additional parcels to their C & R Farms, allowing them to move to the land and farm full time in 1994.

Twenty-three years later, the Talbotts protected 22 acres of Palisade peach and apricot orchards through a conservation agreement with Colorado West Land Trust.

The couple had previously conserved 59 acres of prime farmland with the Land Trust. Clare and Rob used proceeds from the conservation agreements to acquire additional farmland so that their son and daughter could join the growing operation.

"We believe it is important to preserve farming for future generations," Rob said. "There is



Rob and Clare Talbott, owners of C & R Farms. Photo by Chancey Bush/The Daily Sentinel.

a lot of pressure on orchards to subdivide their land so homes can be built. Once these homes are built, the small orchard on the property can't sustain the cost of the home, therefore putting the property out of reach of young farmers to purchase

the property as an initial investment or an existing young farmer to expand. We want future generations who want to make farming their livelihood to have the ability to afford to do so."

Palisade's favorable micro-

climate, prime soils, and senior water rights make it the most productive fruit-growing district in the time zone. "It's worth preserving the highest fruit growing area in the United States with its very unique weather pattern," Rob said.

The Talbotts' 22 acres marked Colorado West Land Trust's 850th acre of Palisade farmland conserved through the Fruitlands Forever Initiative. This effort seeks to preserve 1,000 acres of productive farmland in the East Valley and provide a critical mass of farmland large enough to sustain the industry into the future. Funding for the conservation agreement with the Talbotts and other Palisade-area farms has been provided through Great Outdoors Colorado, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Gates Family Foundation, the City of Fruita, the Town of Palisade, the City of Grand Junction and Mesa County.

Thanks to the foresight of people like Rob and Clare Talbott, the fruit and wine industry has a stable land base for production. Colorado's future farmers will continue the Palisade fruit-growing tradition as consumers clamor for the perfect Palisade peach. ♦



Photo by Robb Reece Photography

Preserving Colorado's Ranching Heritage

By Elaine Matthews

"If we don't conserve the ranch, who will?" Gary Roberts asked. "It's important to protect our state's ranching heritage, especially since the area ranchers are having a hard time finding pasture for their cattle."

The ranch in question was established around 1881 and it is 242 acres of the Uncompahgre River Valley between Ridgway and Ouray. Gary Roberts and Barbara Parish finalized the conservation agreement, which consists of a five-acre homestead, 101 acres of irrigated hay field and pasture, 136 acres of native plants, mountain

shrub land and forest of Douglas fir, aspen, cottonwood and ponderosa pine, near the end of 2017.

"The drought was rough on the pastures this year," Roberts said, "but we were still able to have a couple long-time ranchers use the property to graze their cattle and put up some hay."

Roberts and Parish purchased the property in 2013 to protect the land.

"We heard talk of a proposed development for that piece of land, and we couldn't let a housing development happen to this open space," Roberts said. "We had to buy it to keep the valley floor open for the wildlife and the ranchers. A

development wouldn't have done much for the ranching legacy, wildlife habitat or the pristine views of Mt. Abrams."

Roberts and Parish rehabilitated

"It's great that we get to share our property with all these critters, even foxes and badgers."

the pastureland over the past four years. With proper irrigation, planting of natural grasses and herd rotation, the pasture is primed for grazing and it has become more favorable for elk and mule deer severe winter range, black bears and bald eagles.

"We are pleased that we are able to keep this a ranching and wildlife corridor," Roberts said. "It's great that we get to share our property with all these critters, even foxes and badgers."

Colorado West Land Trust received a grant from the Telluride Foundation to assist with costs of granting the Roberts-Parish conservation easement. ♦

CONSERVATION & COMMUNITY:

Adding Access to Trails and Open Space Along Monument Road

By Libby Collins, CWLT Staff

LUNCH LOOP CONNECTOR TRAIL

The popularity of the Lunch Loop Trail System continues to grow. Located just a few miles from Downtown Grand Junction on Monument Road, it is the most popular trail network in the Grand Valley, experiencing 120,000 visits annually.

Colorado West Land Trust and the City of Grand Junction are working together to construct the Loop Connector Trail, which will link Las Colonias Park, the Colorado Riverfront Trail, and the Lunch Loop Trail System. This paved, multi-use path will make it easier for people of all ages, abilities, and socioeconomic backgrounds to experience the outdoors.

Alongside its partners, Mesa County and the Bureau of Land Management, the Land Trust and the City expect to complete the new trail in the fall of 2019.

NEW LUNCH LOOP TRAILHEAD AMENITIES

The Lunch Loop Trailhead also serves as a favorite community gathering place for trail users. Recognizing that amenities are limited and increased traffic jeopardizes safety in the parking lot, the Land Trust and its project partners, under the guidance of the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program, engaged the public to



Arelli and Ivette, students from the Riverside Educational Center, enjoy a hike at the Three Sisters as part of the RIO program. Thank you local supporters including the Junior Service Club and Rocky Mountain Health Foundation.



An artist's conception of a proposed sidewalk, looking at completion in 2020.

facilitate redesign of the trailhead.

Community meetings yielded strategic solutions including relocating trail access points, building a new informational kiosk, constructing shade shelters and seating walls that blend with the landscape, and adding a tailgate area to encourage trail users to gather outside of the traffic flow.

This winter, the Land Trust will kick off a campaign to fund trailhead improvements with plans for project completion to coincide with the Lunch Loop Connector Trail ribbon cutting.

Thank you to these Trailhead campaign initiators for generously donating early to support this great community project: Alpine Bank, Grand Junction Subaru, All Metals Welding, RockyMounts, First Choice Real Estate, and Mandy Harter/Remax

Look for news about the campaign, fundraising events, and how you can invest in one of the Grand Valley's favorite outdoor community spaces. ♦

Twenty Years of Habitat Restoration in Delta County



The Welfelt-Lewis Property in Delta County.

By Dillon Robertson, CWLT Staff

John Welfelt moves through a dense patch of willows and I lose sight of him for a moment. “Keep track of how much water you see!” he yells back as I follow behind him. I try to keep count of the various ponds we pass but get distracted around the time we reach the fifteenth one.

“Instead of having one giant pond we’ve got a whole bunch of smaller ones, because your edge is what’s really productive. We made them deep enough so that they’ll hold a cold temperature in the summer, but also so that 100 years from now there won’t just be cattails,” John explains. As we tour his property, he recounts the work that has taken place here since he and his business partner, Stephen Lewis, purchased it in the late 1990s.

They located the 160-acre property on the south side of the Uncompahgre River and started constructing ponds. Then, they completed a conservation agreement to protect the land.

From the beginning, their intention has been to improve wildlife habitat. Today, rabbitbrush, three-leaf sumac, cattails and milkweed stand tall and thick against the shoreline of the ponds. Brush them aside and you see crystal clear water

that sustains plenty of life — rainbow trout glide under the duckweed while marsh wrens, swallows and yellow-rumped warblers fly overhead. Occasionally, a family of river otters stops by to help John keep the population of crawdads under control.

There is no wondering why all these animals choose to live here — John and Steve have worked hard to encourage native plant growth and keep invasive species from taking over. With help from the Palisade Insectary, they have released gall midges and wasps to eat the Russian knapweed and a rust fungus to kill the Canada thistle, and the results have been promising.

John and Steve are also working with the North Delta Irrigation Company (NDIC) and the Uncompahgre Valley Water User’s Association (UVWA) to improve habitat on their property. Together, they are working to plant nearly 700 native shrubs and trees on the land over the next five years.

“I think it’s an opportunity to see a lot of these habitats get better, and [Colorado West Land Trust] has been a great partner in this,” says John. “We’re going to lose more habitat to more people, and so I think it’s important to improve all the habitat we can, especially in a desert area.” ♦

John Welfelt and Jeremy Puckett, Stewardship Director for the Land Trust, wading through willows on the property.





By the Numbers

COLORADO WEST LAND TRUST

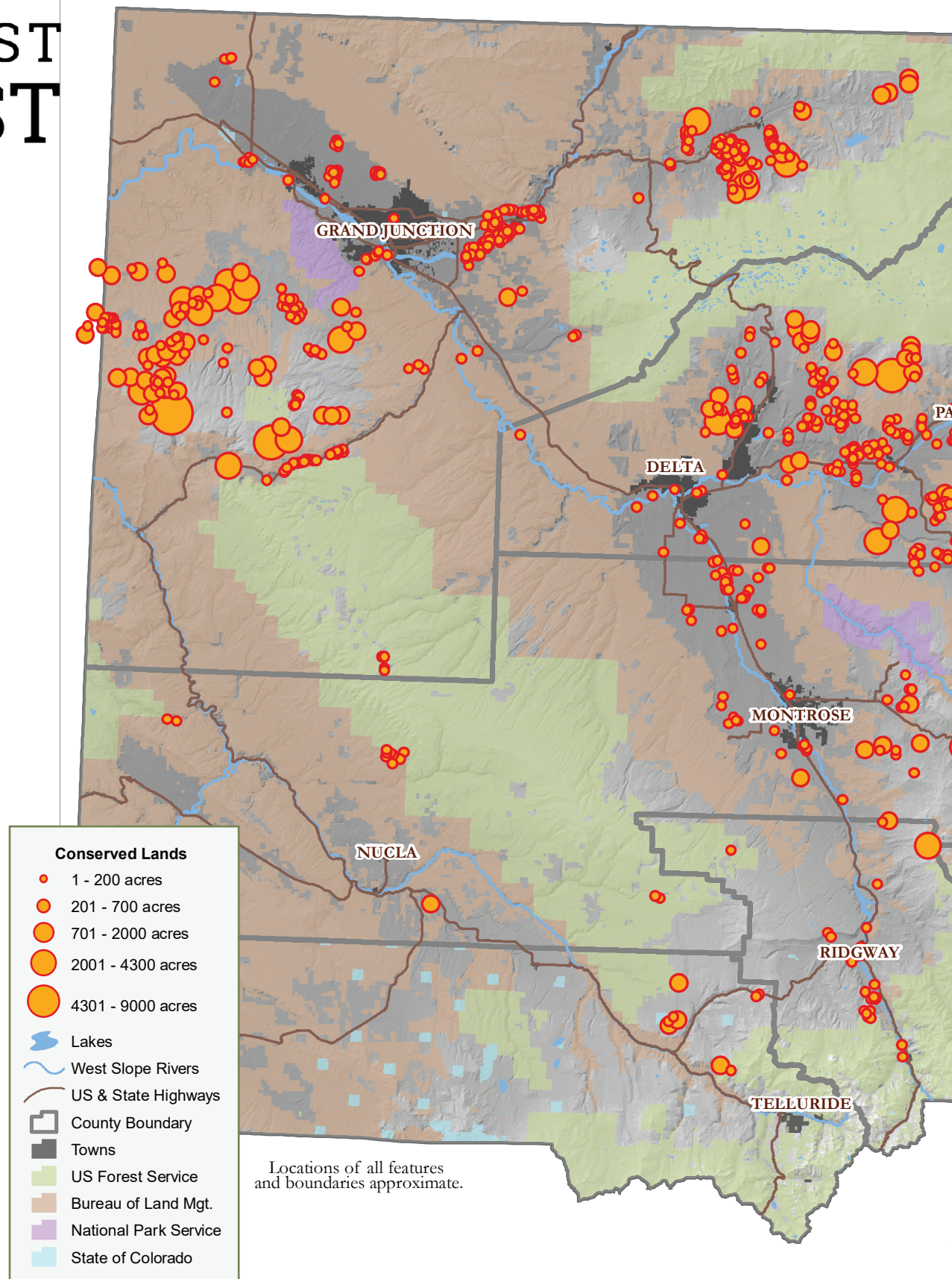
FUNDING:

Where does
the money go?

6% went
to
Administration

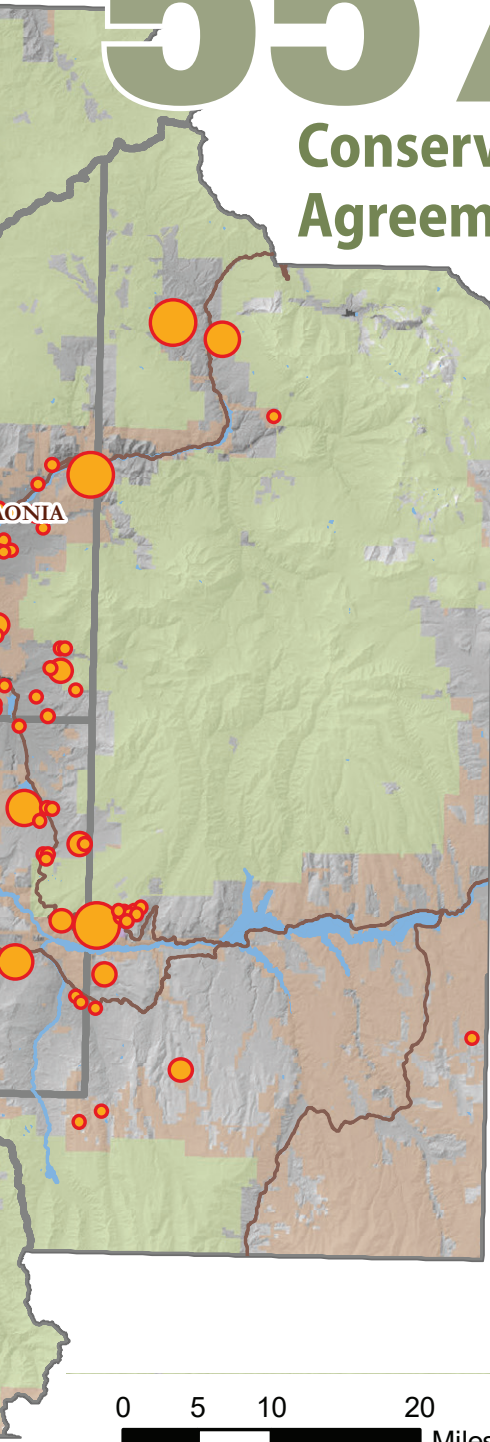
4% went
to
Fundraising

90% went
to
Programs



Members 557

Conservation
Agreements



0 5 10 20
Miles

Map by: Jeremy Puckett / CWLT - 2018

554

Individuals &
Businesses Provided
Financial Support

88,000

Acres

of Elk Winter Range



20,000

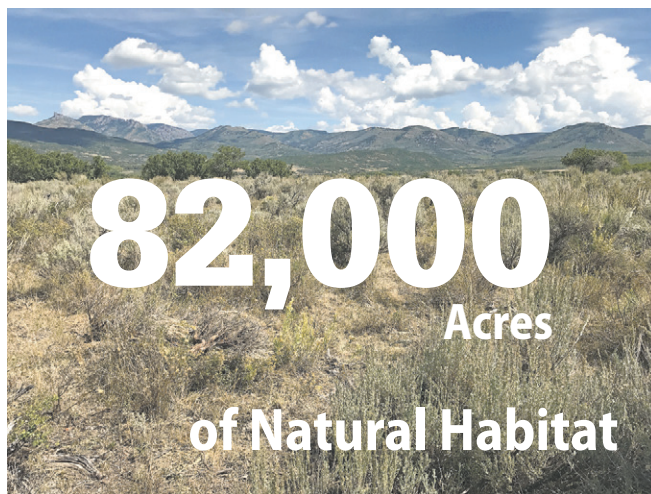
Irrigated
Acres

Photo by Lorna Reed

82,000

Acres

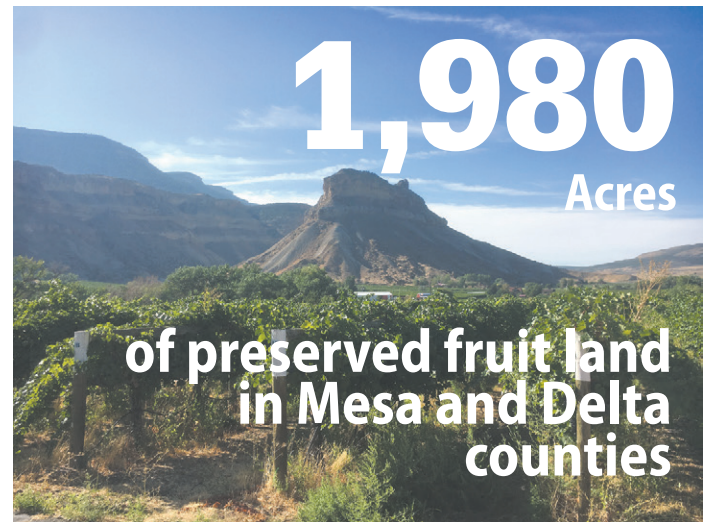
of Natural Habitat



1,980

Acres

of preserved fruit land
in Mesa and Delta
counties



121,000

Total Preserved Acres

Treasure in the West Elk Mountains



By Mary Hughes, CWLTS Staff

In 1912, Alec McLeod homesteaded a beautiful property on Black Mesa, high above the Black Canyon of the Gunnison. A century later, his great-grandson, Tom McLeod, along with his sons, Custer and Levi, carry on the family heritage. They still own and operate Homestead Ranch, which lies along the West Elk & Historic Scenic Byway.

In 2011, the McLeod family protected the original 1,683-acre Homestead Ranch property with a conservation agreement that would forever protect the unmatched views and important habitat. Five years later the McLeods had the opportunity to purchase an adjoining 400 acres along Highway 92 near Hermit's Rest, a popular rest stop and trailhead. In December 2017, the family worked with Colorado West Land Trust to conserve this

additional acreage as well.

Guided big game hunts have been a part of the ranch since the 1930's and the family continues that tradition, operating as an outfitter and trophy elk ranch. A portion of the property is managed as big game pastureland for the operation's trophy elk herd.

The conservation agreement not only preserves that area's ranching heritage and scenic views but also preserves important habitat, including sage brush meadows, aspen, and subalpine forests. This landscape provides habitat for elk, mule deer, big horn sheep, black bear and mountain lions. The property is also important habitat for raptors, migratory birds, small mammals and provides year-round habitat for bald eagles.

Conservation of Homestead Ranch gives Tom and his family peace of mind knowing that this historic property will remain an undeveloped part of this scenic landscape forever. ♦



Tom McLeod and his father.



HIDDEN GUARDIANS IN THE MOUNTAINS

The Highway 92 section of the West Elk Scenic & Historic Byway ranks as one of the most scenic and geologically interesting drives in Colorado. Black Canyon National Park and the Gunnison National Forest protect a large portion of the habitat and open space along this popular route. However, many would be surprised to know that private land conservation protects much of the byway's spectacular scenery.

Tom McLeod and son Custer on newly conserved property overlooking the San Juans, Morrow Point Reservoir, Scenic Byway. Photo by Dawn Reeder, Rare Earth Science, LLC.



LAND TRUST PROTECTS SACRED PETROGLYPH SITE NEAR MONTROSE

By Sharon Sullivan

An elaborate petroglyph site in western Colorado has been preserved thanks to an innovative partnership between Colorado West Land Trust and The Archeological Conservancy.

The Shavano Valley Petroglyphs were protected when the Conservancy signed a conservation agreement with the Land Trust in 2014. Preserving culturally significant lands is one part of the Land Trust's mission.

Both the Ute Indian Museum and the Montrose Welcome Center guide weekly tours of this special place west of Montrose.

The late Clifford Duncan, who was a respected elder and Northern Ute spokesman, interpreted the Shavano site for archaeologist Carol Patterson, whose book "Petroglyphs of Western Colorado and the Northern Ute Indian Reservation as Interpreted by Clifford Duncan," plus her "Shavano Valley Petroglyphs Trail Guide" explains the site's rock art. Duncan considered Shavano the most sacred Ute site, Patterson said.

Archaic hunters and gatherers, as well as more recent arrivals, used to winter in the area where there was an artesian well and plenty of game. The Utes, who occupied the site from 1600 to 1881, created most of what is visible at Shavano today. A short trail through a field of prickly pear cactus leads to the Dakota sandstone cliff face where the petroglyphs are engraved.

Ancient maps carved on the rocks depict trails, drainages, side creeks, and the Uncompahgre River. The site was a gathering spot where trails converge.

"We still use those trails," Patterson said. "They're old Ute trails that came from old game trails. Their survival depended on hunting and knowing these trails."

The Archeological Conservancy, an Albuquerque-based nonprofit that protects significant archeological sites in the United States, purchased the property from the Montrose Community Foundation with the help of matching funds from the Colorado State Historical Society. Each year a staff member from Colorado West Land Trust monitors the site.

The Shavano Valley Petroglyphs are listed on the Colorado Register of Historic Places. ♦

Carol Patterson explains the Shavano Valley Petroglyphs.



BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR

Aaron Young enjoys living in western Colorado because of the open space and recreational opportunities that the region offers. As a mountain biker, outdoor enthusiast, local business owner and property developer, he appreciates Colorado West Land Trusts efforts to conserve the lands that add to the increasingly higher quality of life in the Grand Valley. That is why he supports the Land Trust, both as a business sponsor and Monthly Sustaining Partner.

"I have been a Monthly Sustaining Partner since 2016. By contributing regularly to Colorado West Land Trust, I'm helping support the important work that the organization does throughout the year. I'm impressed with the Land Trust's efforts to protect the scenic landscapes along Monument Road and other areas. CWLT's purchase of Three Sisters and other lands for trail expansion provides a family friendly place where my son and others can be outside near the city and ride their bikes. It's important to me to support organizations throughout my career that are growing our local economy and lifestyle. I encourage you to join me in becoming a Monthly Sustaining Partner."

Monthly giving is easy! Your contribution to CWLT can be automatically and securely made with your credit card. Visit our website at www.cowestlandtrust.org to get started.



FIELD CLUB EVENTS 2018

This year's outings included a farm tour, multiple wildflower hikes, a fire mitigation presentation on conserved property, and our spring picnic in Unaweep Canyon.

Conserved property overlooking the San Juan Mountains provided a beautiful vantage point for a presentation on fire mitigation strategies with Jamie Gomez, Mitigation Specialist from the West Region Wildfire Council.



YOUTH PROGRAMS 2018

Each year, the Land Trust organizes programs to foster a connection with nature for today's youth.

The Land Trust staff and East Middle School students went birding at Avant Vineyards, a spectacular privately-conserved vineyard along the Colorado River, with Nic Korte from Audubon.



"I've always thought that we humans are not really owners of land, but rather stewards: we're just passing through! I want to be part of a permanent legacy to our community by preserving and protecting nature's gifts. Colorado West Land Trust gives us a way to concentrate our efforts."

**—Helen Love,
Financial Advisor,
CWLT Business Sponsor**

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS AND PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION

*This represents donations from Oct. 1, 2017 – Sept. 30, 2018. We apologize if we have omitted or misspelled your name. Please let us know. An * asterisk denotes our Monthly Sustaining Partners.*

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CONSERVED FARMLAND & LOCAL FOOD

Colorado West Land Trust supports ag heritage with conservation easements

By Sharon Sullivan

Many farmers and ranchers in Palisade and North Fork Valley have taken steps to preserve the area's rich agricultural heritage by conserving their land. In doing so it will never be developed, thus keeping the land available for agricultural production for generations to come. And residents reap the benefits of having access to locally produced foods and beverages available at farm stands, farmers' markets, wineries and restaurants.

FROM THE FARM

Steve Ela, of Ela Family Farms in Hotchkiss, a fourth-generation, certified organic orchard operation, was motivated to conserve his 100-acre family farm after seeing subdivisions spring up all around the area where his great-grandfather used to farm in Grand Junction.

"It spurred us to put this property (in Hotchkiss) in a conservation easement," Ela said. "Our customers like that our land is conserved."

Ela sells his organic apples, peaches, pears, plums, sweet cherries and heirloom tomatoes to nearby residents who sign up for the farm's CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program. Ela operates a second CSA in Gunnison, at Western State University. His produce, as well as the jams, fruit butters and dried fruit made in the farm's commercial kitchen, is also available at Front Range farmers markets and at a Whole Foods store in Basalt.

Each spring Ela Family Farms hosts Orchard Tour Weekend, a time for customers to connect with the land as they tour the farm, learn about the Ela's growing practices, and partake of an evening dinner in the orchard.



Ela Family Farms at Front Range farmers' market

TO THE TABLE

Palisade Café 11.0, a cozy downtown Palisade farm-to-table restaurant serves both local foods and beverages. Owners John Sabal and his wife Marti Montoya purchase locally grown produce to use at their restaurant, including peaches from C & R Farms, a conserved farm owned by Clare and Roblee Talbott (read their story on page 4).

Sabal buys boxes of peaches that he uses all winter long — "they freeze well," he said. Peach gazpacho is the café's signature peach dish. He also makes pico de gallo with fresh peaches, peach salsas, and a barbecue sauce with added peach. For lunch, there's the popular BLP — a bacon, lettuce, and peach sandwich.

John and Marti are committed to sourcing local as much as possible, thus, the café serves beverages produced locally as well. Several wines from Colterris Winery are poured at the café. In 2016 the High family of Colterris Winery and High Country Orchards purchase a conserved vineyard near Palisade. Palisade café also offers hard ciders produced by Talbott's Cider Company, which grows fruit on conserved lands around Palisade. ♦

Palisade Café 11.0 locally sourced salad featuring C & R Farms peaches.



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