



MESA LAND TRUST

Connecting Us With the Lands We Love



Lands for Tomorrow

Pictured: Monument Road. Photo courtesy Robb Reece Photography

Thank you to our Platinum Underwriters for their sponsorship of this publication



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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CONNECTING COMMUNITY, EXPERIENCING THE LAND

DEAR FRIENDS,

In this election season of partisan rancor and bitter divisiveness, we find solace in the natural lands that surround us. The latest attack ad fades away as we walk through a gallery of cottonwood trees in brilliant yellow fall foliage. That divisive Facebook post becomes meaningless as we bite into the last of the season's local sweet corn.

But more than providing respite, our landscapes connect people. The trails along Monument Road bring together bikers, hikers, runners and dog walkers. Love for wildlife and awe-inspiring scenery unites third-generation natives and newcomers alike. Appreciation for the bounty of our local farms and ranches knows no political affiliation. Common ground quite literally surrounds us.

Mesa Land Trust's mission is to work with landowners to conserve the special places that define our community. We do this to conserve our heritage and enhance our quality of life. We also do this for

the future, so our children and grandchildren can experience the wonder that is western Colorado.

Unfortunately, we are in danger of raising a generation that has no connection with the great outdoors. The average American child today spends less than 7 minutes a day playing outside. In response, the Land Trust is partnering with other organizations to get kids into nature so they can experience the joy and reap the benefits of outdoor play.

In the pages to follow, you will see how protecting land touches so many in our community. You will read about these people, the places they love and how the land brings us together. You will learn about the partnerships that extend our impact and the generous supporters that make Mesa Land Trust's work possible.

We are grateful for our donors and partners and encourage you to join our effort.

Now, may we suggest that you get outside and connect with the remarkable landscape we call home?

Warm Regards,

Steve McCall
President

Rob Bleiberg
Executive Director



2015-16 Board of Directors, left to right Bill Prakken, Chuck McDaniel, Barbara Chamberlin, Van Graham, Jane Quimby, Steve McCall, Russ Walker, Guy Parker, Margery Fillinger, Pam Childers, Sandie Cooper, Zach Eyler, Janine Rider, Belle Chesnick, Mike Sewell, Bill Findlay.



PRESERVING FRUIT LAND FOR FAMILY FARMS

By Sharon Sullivan

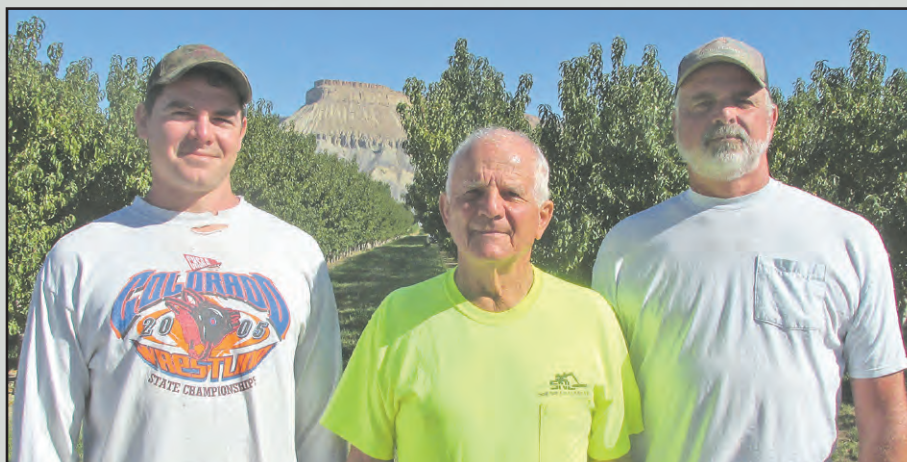
On a sunny September morning Al Ruckman shares his bounty with a visitor to his East Orchard Mesa farm – a handful of blackberries from the patch near his house; a ripe peach plucked from the orchard just beyond the front pasture.

A box of newly harvested tomatoes, cucumbers and jalapeno peppers sit in the barn waiting for family members to drop by and help themselves.

Like a lot of farming families, several of Ruckman's grown children and grandchildren live within a few miles of one another. They grow much of their own food, including chickens and steers for protein.

Roses grow in front of Ruckman's Victorian-style house that his late wife Sue designed and son Terry built. Looking north toward the peach orchard, Mt. Garfield looms impressively above the trees.

As a teenager Ruckman worked on



Left to right: Nick, Al and Ted Ruckman. Photo by Sharon Sullivan

his family's farm north of town – a farm that gave way to development years ago. A civil engineer by trade – his business, Geo Stabilization, fixes landslides. Ruckman also loves farming. He passed on the heritage to his son Ted and grandson Nick.

Together, the family took measures to preserve prime farmland

on East Orchard Mesa when they placed 17 of their acres in a conservation easement in 2016. The Ruckmans farm a total of 45 acres, 18 of which is owned by Bob Barrett, and was already conserved.

"You can't develop it. That's what we want – for it to stay in farming," Ted Ruckman said. "It gives you a

sense of long-term security to know it will always be in agriculture."

His father Al adds: "In the 1970s, and early 80s, they were carving up East Orchard Mesa severely. If they'd kept going there wouldn't be a fruit business here anymore."

Proceeds from selling their development rights to Mesa Land Trust will allow the family to purchase additional property for Nick, who plans to continue farming. That land, too, will be conserved, said his dad.

The Ruckmans first heard of Mesa Land Trust from neighbors who had conserved their property. Family members learned more about the program while attending a Western Colorado Horticultural Society convention in Grand Junction, where they met Ilana Moir, Mesa Land Trust director of conservation. "Our whole intention," said Ted Ruckman, "is we don't want it to be developed. We want to keep it in the family and keep it in farming." ♦

CONSERVATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, A NATURAL PARTNERSHIP



High Family; left to right: John Weingardt (son in-law), Katie Weingardt (daughter), Keenan High, Theresa High, Scott High, Matthew High.

By Sharon Sullivan

After Jay and Jen Christianson, owners of Canyon Wind Cellars in Palisade, conserved 50.2 acres with Mesa Land Trust, they found it a plus when it came time to sell.

Buyers Theresa and Scott High were already growing 71 acres of peaches and 35 acres of wine grapes on East Orchard Mesa, and were planning to build a new winery on their land when the Christianson property became available.

The additional acreage added “critical mass” to Theresa’s Colterris Wines operation, making it easier to compete on the world market, she said. One hundred percent of the wine made by the Highs comes from grapes that they grow.

The Christiansons sold their development rights when they signed the conservation agreement in July, which allowed them to lower their asking price, making the property

more affordable for the Highs. It also made it easier for the Christiansons to sell their land, winery, and equipment to one buyer, Jay said.

“The conservation agreement allows us to expand,” Theresa High said. “It allows us to keep the vineyards and orchards in agriculture forever. We are the stewards now. All three of our kids are interested in carrying it forward.”

“If this property would have gone into other development it would really hurt the agriculture industry here, to have 54 acres of prime vineyard go away.”

The Highs sell their wines throughout Colorado to more than 100 different restaurants, and more than 60 stores. They also market their Colorado wines online to 11 states.

Palisade Chamber of Commerce director Julianne Adams said “Agriculture is the main industry that drives our tourism and the main ingredient

in our quality of life.”

Most of the produce that supplies Grand Valley’s multiple farmers markets is grown in the Palisade area. The town’s peach, lavender, and wine festivals attract tourists to the area each summer.

A record-breaking 6,600 people from all over the world attended this year’s 25th anniversary Colorado Mountain Winefest, Saturday, September 17, in Palisade’s Riverbend Park.

During the four-day festival the Winefest brought \$750,000 - \$1 million into the local economy, said Cassidee Shull, executive director of the Colorado Association for Viticulture and Enology.

Colorado agribusinesses contribute \$40 billion to the state’s economy annually and provide more than 170,000 jobs, said Wendy Lee White, marketing specialist with the Colorado Department of Agriculture.

When East Orchard Mesa farmers John and Doris Butler, and Palisade peach farmers Harry and Bonnie Talbott, plus others, founded the Mesa Land Trust more than 35 years ago, their vision was to save the Palisade area’s farmland.

Harry’s son Bruce, who manages Talbott Farms vineyards and orchards, said Mesa County’s agricultural industry has benefited from conservation agreements that make land more affordable for longtime farmers who want to expand, and young farmers starting anew.

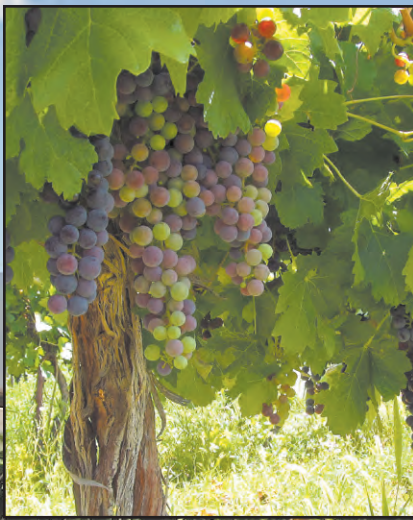
“It’s a good place to grow food. Conservation agreements promote confidence in the agriculture industry,” Talbott said.

“If there’s a mindset that this is a stable, growing industry, you’ll put money down to reestablish orchards,” he said. “On the other hand, if you think it’s just a matter of time before you’re surrounded by houses, you think ‘why do this?’”

“A support of Mesa Land Trust is a vote for the future of agriculture here.” ♦



Vineyard at sunset.



Sodowsky Farm, Delta County



REGIONAL CONSERVATION FOR A REGIONAL AG ECONOMY



Ken and Susan Sodowsky

In 1991 Ken and Susan Sodowsky moved from their Ouray County ranch and purchased a 300 acre farm in Delta County. They raised their children here and continue to farm the property. Situated south of the Grand Mesa at about 5,700 feet, the couple grows grapes, which are purchased by area wineries and leases a portion of the land to a local rancher for hay and cattle grazing. The remaining property contains sweeping fields and lush riparian habitat.

The Sodowsky property helps form a contiguous 4,200-acre block of privately conserved parcels and Bureau of Land Management lands that provide a connection for wildlife, preserve unobstructed views of the Grand Mesa, and support a base of local agricultural lands.

Bald eagles are regular winter visitors to the farm and during the spring migration, large kettles of sandhill cranes can be observed in the hayfields. As residential development takes place at lower elevations, open space like the Sodowsky's provides very important winter range for elk and mule deer migrating off of the Grand Mesa. These big game animals, and many other mammals and birds, travel along the wash that runs through the heart of the property.

In 2014, the Ken and Susan sought the help of Mesa Land Trust to conserve the property. For them, agricultural land conservation is important for sustaining a critical mass of farmland to support local food production. "I've seen so much farm and ranch land turn into development. Old ranches go into residential subdivision and we lose the ability to produce food on that land," said Ken. "We strongly believe in conservation." ♦

EXPANDING OUR WORK

Delta County farms produce over half of the pears grown in Colorado and nearly 75 percent of the apples and cherries, and are second only to Mesa County in peach and grape production. In 2013, fruit growers from Delta County asked Mesa Land Trust to help conserve their wonderful farms. This work in Delta County is a natural extension of our work with Palisade fruit growers.

"The fruit industry in Palisade and Delta County share many connections. Protecting land for farming in both locations strengthens the agricultural economy of the region and assures a critical mass of productive, local farm ground for generations to come," said Ilana Moir, MLT Conservation Director.

Three years later, the Land Trust has worked with four Delta County farmers and conserved over 600 acres of highly productive farmland in this area which is considered a statewide priority for conservation.



WILDERNESS IN OUR BACKYARD

Expanding recreational opportunities along Monument Road

By Sharon Sullivan

The Lunch Loop-Three Sisters area off Monument Road is bustling most mornings and afternoons with mountain bikers, hikers, runners, and dog walkers. With more than 50 miles of trails, there's plenty of room to enjoy its wide-open spaces.

The Bureau of Land Management-Grand Junction office, and the Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association developed the Lunch Loop trail system initially to provide "world class riding experiences." But you don't have to be a mountain biker to appreciate the trails there.

On a typical Thursday afternoon the Mesa Monument Striders, meet for a group run. Afterwards, members of the local running group set up chairs in the parking lot to hang out and socialize. Occasionally someone cranks up some homemade ice cream, said runner Cynthia Malleck.

Mesa Land Trust added nearly 200 acres to the Lunch Loop area when it purchased the adjoining Three Sisters, and Bookends properties in 2012 and 2014, respectively. Nearly 1,000 donors helped raise

the \$2.4 million for the purchase. Today the City owns the land and the Land Trust maintains the conservation agreements that will forever preserve the spectacular views and trail-based recreation.

Through acquiring this land, Mesa Land Trust has worked with COPMOBA to build trails for beginners, kids, and families to add to the vast collection of aggressive and challenging trails at Lunch Loop.

"We really wanted to make this incredible area more available for a wider range of trail users, including families and kids. We want to help connect people to place to build even deeper connections to the land," said Libby Collins, Mesa Land Trust's community engagement and outreach coordinator.

The Land Trust engages community members of all ages – through restoration projects, trail building and on guided interpretative hikes.

Grand Junction's chapter of Great Old Broads for Wilderness provides crew leaders and expertise for native plant restoration projects.

"There have been so many

organizations working together on projects out there," said member Sherry Schenk,

Mesa Land Trust has long sought public input to learn what community members want to see happen along Monument Road, the gateway to Colorado National Monument's east entrance. The Land Trust learned via public meetings that residents would like a path connecting the Riverfront Trail to the Lunch Loop-Three Sisters area. Mesa Land Trust is working with the City of Grand Junction on this path that will make Three Sisters and Lunch Loop trailhead accessible for trail users of all ages and abilities.

"Trail access and the vast undeveloped landscapes of Three Sisters and Lunch Loop area are a real draw for residents and visitors," Collins said. "The area sees more than 100,000 visits a year. It's one of the most popular trails in Mesa County."

Harry and Joann Hotimsky reside within two miles of the Lunch Loop – Three Sisters area – their family has spent "thousands of hours on those trails," Harry Hotimsky said. Their oldest daughter became the

Eastern Collegiate Mountain Bike Cycling Champion – a title she earned thanks to skills she learned on the Lunch Loop and from other riders, said her father.

"Our kids grew up on those trails. We run and walk our dogs there every day," Hotimsky said. "It's amazing how much usage has grown," since he and his family moved to the area in 2001.

As owners of 1st Choice Real Estate Company, the Hotimskys work with people from all over the world that are interested in moving to Grand Junction, specifically for its trails and open space, Hotimsky said.

"It's huge – people don't understand what a true economic boost it is," Hotimsky said.

"Originally the Three Sisters was going to be a subdivision of homes – now it's bike paths and trails for the entire community to enjoy."

Because of their appreciation for open space, the Hotimskys have supported Mesa Land Trust with financial contributions and as volunteers building trails.

"It's amazing what Mesa Land Trust has done in this community," Hotimsky said. ♦

By Sharon Sullivan

American kids spend an average of four to seven minutes playing outside each day – a fraction of the time their parents spent outdoors as children, even though research shows that being outdoors benefits children physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively.

Mesa Land Trust believes all kids deserve access to the great outdoors – including the public lands that exist in our own backyard. For that reason the Land Trust is partnering with a Great Outdoors Colorado Inspire Initiative to nurture in children a strong connection to the natural world.

The Land Trust is part of a broad coalition called RIO (Recreation Inspired by the Outdoors) that includes Grand Junction Parks and Recreation, Riverside Education Center, Colorado Canyons Association, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Healthy Mesa County, Mesa County Partners, and the Riverside Task Force. The coalition received a GOCO Inspire grant to create a plan for improving access to existing outdoor parks or trails, and



bolster youth programs.

The RIO initiative focuses on introducing kids from the Riverside and Orchard Mesa neighborhoods to the Riverfront Trail, local parks, the Three Sisters area, and National Conservation Areas.

For example, over the past summer, Partner's Joe Funk led biking excursions for more than 50 kids from the Riverside Education Center summer camp. They explored the Riverfront Trail, Three

Sisters area, and the Lunch Loop bike park where Funk taught kids how to mountain bike – with bikes provided by Grand Valley Bikes, a citizen group that promotes active transportation and bike safety, Partners, and Hilltop.

"If you can pique their interest, then you can let them know how accessible it is – public lands are your lands," Funk said. "I came from Texas where most everything is private," and not available to the public.

"Kids love being outside," said REC executive director Joy Hudak. "These kids are our future stewards of our public lands. Finding ways to engage and help them feel connected is important."

The Riverside kids have become great proponents of getting outside.

As a result of the biking and other RIO outdoor programs, the older participants formed a Youth Advisory Council to help the coalition create more outdoor programming that will benefit their own communities. ♦



Local youth learn mountain biking skills.

COMMUNITY COALITION GETS KIDS OUTSIDE



Our Year

41

Sustaining Partners provided regular support and ensured our ability to take advantage of emerging opportunities

590

individuals & businesses provided financial support

130

youth helped build trails & restore native vegetation, experienced hiking, biking, and learned map & compass reading

300

supporters attended the annual picnic

45



in Numbers

○ Administration

○ Fundraising

94% of our funding went to programs and only 2% went toward fundraising expenses

○ Programs

65,860 total acreage conserved

970 acres conserved in the last year, valued at nearly \$3,000,000



Beeman and Jessie Casto.
Photo by Josh Duplechain

5 guests joined us for interpretative hikes on conserved lands



PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

“If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together.”

—African Proverb

Over the past year Mesa Land Trust has partnered with Montrose-based Black Canyon Regional Land Trust to best conserve the amazing natural lands that surround us. From the Bookcliffs to the San Juan Mountains, from the state line to Blue Mesa Reservoir, this region contains some of Colorado’s most scenic places, incredible wildlife habitat, and productive farm land. The partnership seeks to:

- Bring Mesa Land Trust’s energy and expertise to a spectacular, biologically-rich, agriculturally important yet currently under-served region
- Enhance Mesa Land Trust’s long-term viability
- Grow Mesa Land Trust’s capacity and reach
- Ensure a bright future for conservation across the region

RANCHING ON GLADE PARK

Protecting habitat and a way of life

By Sharon Sullivan

As a Glade Park cowgirl who managed Mountain Island Ranch, Belle Chesnick said she couldn't have asked for a better career.

Sure, there were plenty of "hot, dusty days and really, really cold days" gathering cattle while riding horseback through a wide range of terrain. But Chesnick wouldn't have traded working in the wide-open spaces for anything.

On any given day Chesnick would see wildlife – mountain lions, bears, elk, deer, foxes, coyotes, beavers, badgers, turkeys and all kinds of small rodents and birds.

"If you stop, listen and look you can see lots of things," Chesnick said.

Though she's retired now, Chesnick continues to help run her family's Bieser Creek Cattle operation along with son and daughter-in law, Sam and Diane Branham. Grandkids Ben and Emily, ages 12 and 10, ride horseback, herding cattle as well.

The family leases Mountain Island property, where Sam also runs his 2V Outfitters hunting business. The ranch preserved important wildlife habitat when it conserved more than 25,000 acres

with Mesa Land Trust years ago.

Located 16 miles west of Grand Junction, with an elevation ranging from 5,000 to 10,000 feet, the Glade Park-Piñon Mesa area provides important summer and winter wildlife habitat.

"The whole mountain is an ecosystem for wildlife," said Van Graham, a retired biologist with the Division of Wildlife (renamed Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife), where animals feed on grasses, forbs, and shrubs like oak brush, serviceberry, bitterbrush, and sagebrush.

Glade Park is comprised of

Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service property, plus a large portion of privately held lands. If not for the vision and stewardship of multiple Glade Park private landowners, the area would be prime for development because of its beauty, Graham said.

However, when landowners sign a conservation agreement with Mesa Land Trust the land is protected forever from being subdivided and developed.

"I'm proud of the fact that when I drive down DS Road in Glade Park that my great grand-children will see the same open space I see



Fall on Pinon Mesa (Aubert Property). Photo courtesy John Fielder

2V Outfitters, Belle Chesnick on far right



today because of the efforts of these private landowners and Mesa Land Trust,” Chesnick said.

When she and her husband Tom, who runs his own cattle operation on Glade Park, purchased land, it was already conserved – which attracted Chesnick to the property, she said.

“Conserving open space is very important in the west – anywhere for that matter,” said Chesnick, who served nine years as a board of director for Mesa Land Trust. “Earning a living by ranching can be a ‘gamble,’ economically,” she said.

That’s where hunting helps many Glade Park ranchers generate revenue through outfitting and guiding hunters who travel across the country and who spend thousands of dollars for the opportunity to pursue the area’s

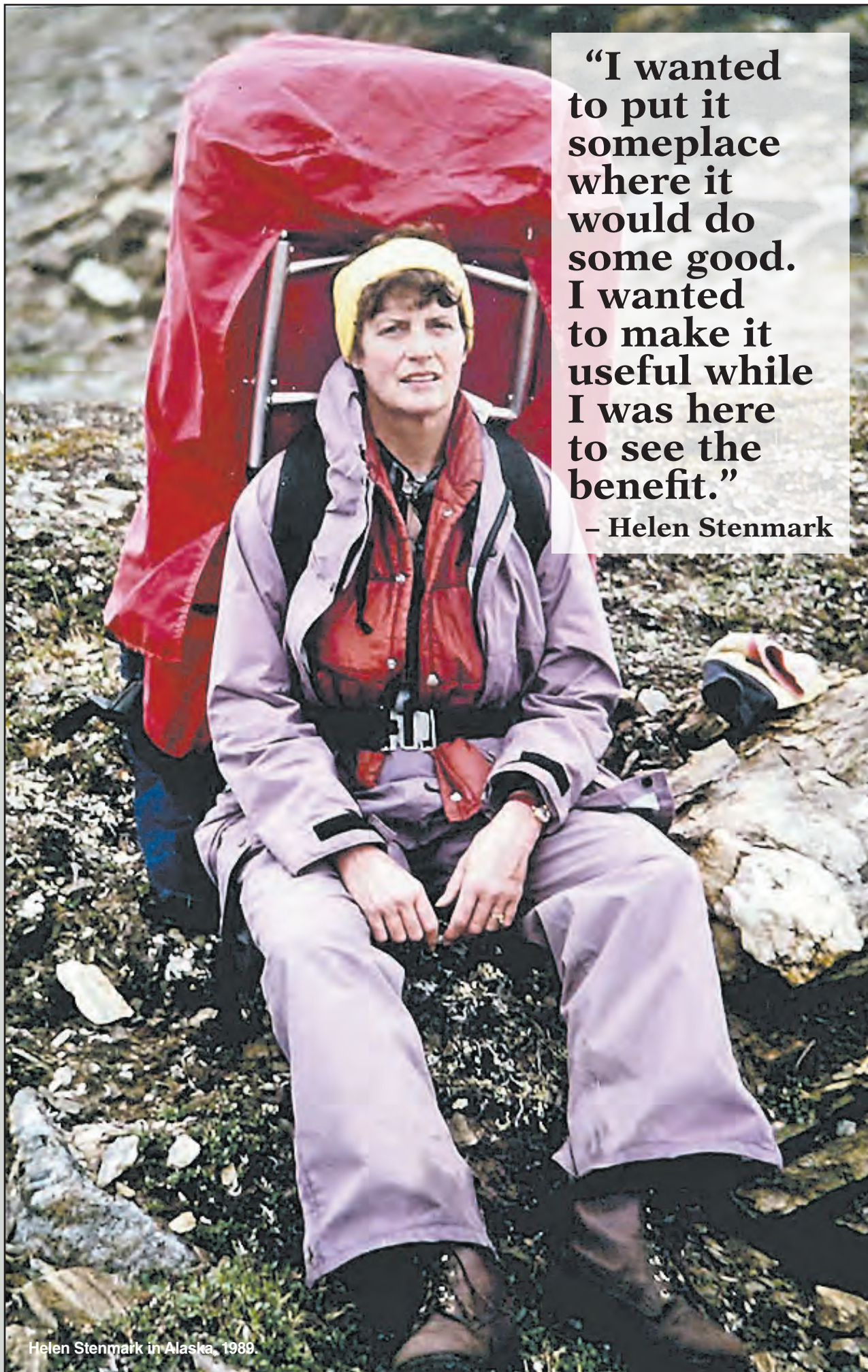
prized elk. This gives ranchers an extra financial incentive to manage habitat so that it supports robust wildlife populations.

Conserved Glade Park property protects important migration corridors, as well as watersheds where rainbow, cutthroat, and brook trout thrive in some of the larger drainages, said Graham, who has served as a MLT board member since 2005.

Over the years, conservation agreements on Glade Park have protected nearly 50,000 acres in this amazing scenic landscape. Today, huge cottonwood galleries along the Little Dolores River have been protected, crucial habitat for Gunnison Sage-Grouse has been preserved, and two-thirds of the areas irrigated land has been conserved. ♦



A buck on Pinon Mesa.



“I wanted to put it someplace where it would do some good. I wanted to make it useful while I was here to see the benefit.”

– Helen Stenmark

Helen Stenmark in Alaska, 1989.

A GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

As a National Park Service ranger, the late Richard Stenmark and his wife Helen were fortunate to live in one of America's most treasured and iconic landscapes, Denali National Park in Alaska. When the two retired they bought a motorhome and spent three years traveling throughout North America—across Canada, down the East Coast, to Mexico, and the American West, finally settling and making their home in Grand Junction.

“Both of us were interested in public lands, conservation, and wilderness,” Helen Stenmark said.

For that reason, when her husband passed away in 2013, she decided to sell their house, move into a smaller apartment, and donate \$100,000 from the sale to Mesa Land Trust.

“I wanted to put it someplace where it would do some good,” Helen said. “I wanted to make it useful while I was here to see the benefit.”

“Helen's planned gift to Mesa Land Trust is truly a transformative contribution. It is an investment in the future of our community—in Western Colorado. It will help sustain a legacy of conserved land that future generations will appreciate,” said Mary Hughes, MLT, Development Officer.

If you would like to consider Mesa Land Trust in your estate plans with a gift of cash or real estate or any of the types of legacy gifts listed below, we would be happy to visit with you.

A simple way to leave a legacy gift is through a Beneficiary Form Designation. By designating Mesa Land Trust as a beneficiary on your bank accounts, IRA, pension, life insurance policy, stocks/bonds, or annuity, a portion of these assets can be directed to Mesa Land Trust. A living will or trust is another way to remember Mesa Land Trust.

To designate a gift to Mesa Land Trust, ask your attorney to include the following in your will or trust: “I give to Mesa County Land Conservancy dba Mesa Land Trust, Grand Junction, Colorado (add written amount of gift, percentage of estate or residuary of estate of description of property).”

For more information please contact MLT Development Director, Mary Hughes at: 970-263-5443; or mary@mesalandtrust.org

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✧ indicates quarterly donor

Zach and Laken Eyler love living and working in western Colorado. They enjoy all the outdoors has to offer and appreciate what the Mesa Land Trust is doing to preserve the character and quality of life in our community. That is why they

became Mesa Land Trust Monthly Sustaining Partners. By signing up online and having a specified amount charged to their credit card each month, they don't have to think about whether they are up to date on their contributions.

"Being a sustaining partner is so simple and it assists the Land Trust with their planning throughout the year. I encourage you to sign up today."

**– Zach Eyler,
MLT Board Member**



Alpine Bank

Member FDIC

COMMITTED TO OUR COMMUNITY

Alpine Bank and the Mesa Land Trust share a number of common interests; one of these is caring about the future of our community's youth and our next generations. In preserving land, we protect one of the most important assets for our future generations to live healthy lifestyles and fulfilling lives.

Preserving farm and ranch lands that support local family agricultural businesses and local food production ensures critical economic diversity and preserves a cultural heritage rooted in the lands around us. Expanding our spectacular, accessible public open space inspires healthy lifestyles, making our community a desirable place to live and visit.

Alpine Bank has been a part of Colorado since 1973 and operating in the Grand Valley since 1990. Employee-owned and locally operated, Alpine Bank has 38 locations, most recently including two Denver branches. Alpine Bank serves more than 130,000 customers with retail, business, wealth management, mortgage and electronic banking services. Being locally operated means the bank can react quickly to its customers' needs.

Since 1990, Alpine Bank has partnered with local organizations around the Grand Valley, investing in people and giving back to our community. "Giving back is a very important part of the bank's employee culture and a core value for us all here at Alpine," said Carolee Hawkins, Alpine Bank regional marketing director.

Join Alpine Bank in giving back! Alpine Bank will match your new monthly donation OR any increase in your existing monthly donation to the Mesa Land Trust up to \$10,000. Sign up by December 31st, 2016!

**Partner with the Mesa Land Trust
and Alpine Bank
to maintain our connection to the land
and preserve the place we call home.**

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS AND PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION

This represents donations from Oct. 1, 2015 – Sept. 30, 2016. We apologize if we have omitted or misspelled your name. Please feel free to let us know.

PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS & TRUSTS

The Agua Fund, Inc.
Alchemy Foundation
The Arches Foundation
The Bacon Family Foundation
LP Brown Foundation
The Colorado Trust
(Directed Contributions Program at
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2015-16 BUSINESS UNDERWRITERS

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MRP
Ruby Canyon Engineering
Safari Ltd.

SILVER

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LOCAL FOOD, YOUNG FARMERS BENEFIT FROM CONSERVED LAND

Mike and Blakely Mechau bought their 20 acre farm in 1972. Framed by Mount Garfield and the Grand Mesa, this permanently conserved property is situated along Highway 6 in the heart of the buffer between Palisade and Clifton. Over the decades, the property has produced peaches, apples, corn, and hay.

Conservation runs deep for the Mechaus. Mike joined the Mesa Land Trust's board in 1986, and was named an Emeritus Member after 16 years of board service. He and Blakely permanently conserved their land in partnership with Mesa Land Trust in 2005 and continue to live on the property.

Scott and Jessica Washkowiak know the importance of conservation to the future of farming. In 2012, the young couple, who own Field to Fork CSA (Community

Supported Agriculture), began their farming operation on conserved land, owned by the Mechaus.

Nationwide, access to affordable land is one of the greatest barriers to young people interested in farming. Leasing the conserved land from the Mechaus provided an affordable foundation for Scott and Jessica to build a flourishing CSA. In turn they were able to purchase an adjoining property to accommodate their growing operation.

Conserved land is good for the farmer, the consumer, and the community. Keeping a base of land available for local agriculture helps assure that young farmers like the Washkowiaks will have affordable farm ground available and that consumers will be able to

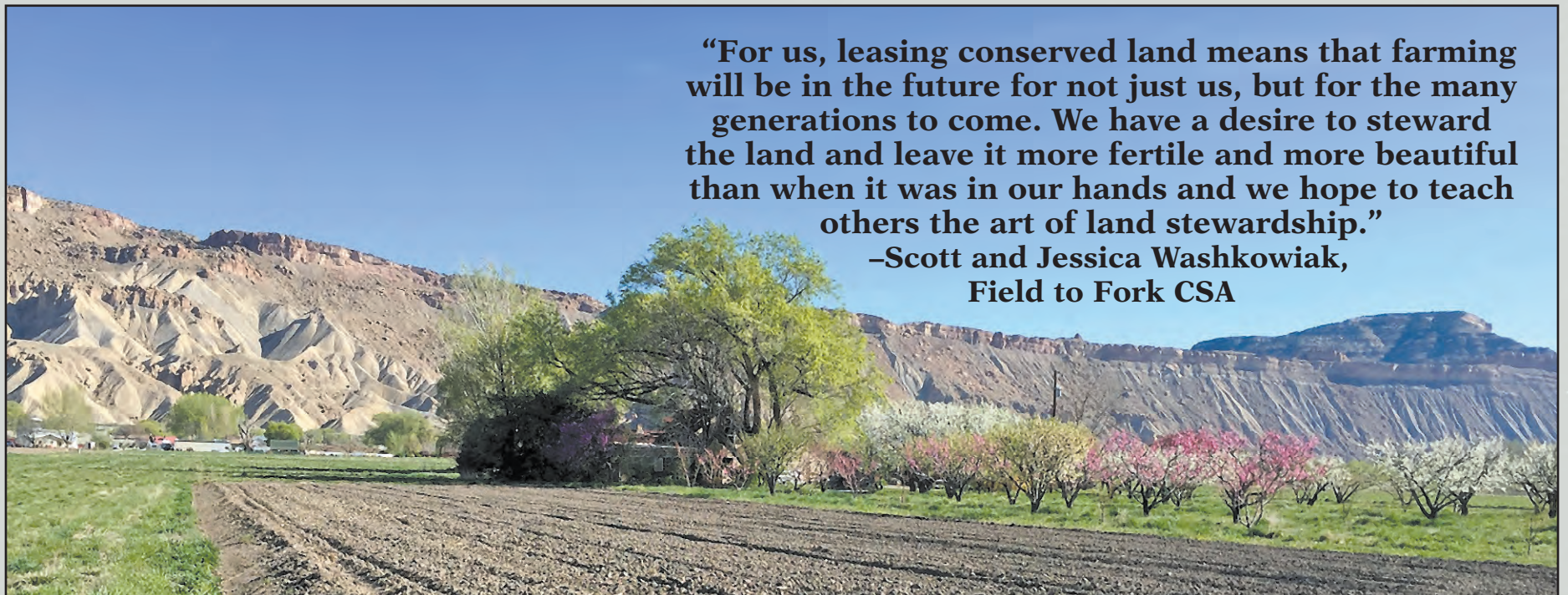
find locally produced food at produce stands and farmers markets across the Grand Valley. Conserved land also contributes to the local economy and the quality of life that we enjoy in Western Colorado.

A CSA provides the consumer with a direct relationship to a local farmer and in turn access to high-quality, fresh fruits and vegetables. Field to Fork had 150 household members for the 2016 season and served 18 restaurants including Bin 707 FoodBar, Il Bistro Italiano, Pablos, 626 on Rood, Palisade Café, and Café Sol. The latter three are members of Field to Forks' new Restaurant Supported Agriculture program. Memberships for the 2017 season are currently available. For more information visit: www.fieldtoforkcsa.com.



"For us, leasing conserved land means that farming will be in the future for not just us, but for the many generations to come. We have a desire to steward the land and leave it more fertile and more beautiful than when it was in our hands and we hope to teach others the art of land stewardship."

**-Scott and Jessica Washkowiak,
Field to Fork CSA**



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