

THIS IS **YOUR PLACE**

2020/2021 Winter Newsletter

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photo: **Matt Berglund**



photo: **Marilyn Rodman**



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As your new Executive Director for the Crested Butte Land Trust, I want to thank our community for a warm welcome since I started in August. As many of you know, most of my life has been spent in the Gunnison Valley and I share your passion for conservation and for the unique character of Crested Butte. Coming into a mature organization, I've been impressed by the breadth of work being done to pursue new land protection opportunities as well as the diverse stewardship projects supporting the views, wildlife, working ranches, and trails that tie our community together. During a time of great uncertainty, the things that matter most to me have become crystal clear including the importance of home, family, and wild places. My work with the Crested Butte Land Trust is a convergence of all three. For that I am grateful.

Like many of you, the transition from summer to winter in the high country is also a time to reflect on the recent past and to consider the future. At the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, the Crested Butte Land Trust was certain that

**"Open Space
Matters
Now More
Than Ever."**

access to safe experiences in the outdoors would be critical to the physical and mental wellbeing of our community. We posed the question: Does Open Space Matter in a Time of Crisis? The answer: Yes, Open Space Matters Now More Than Ever.

Within this newsletter we are sharing some tips for responsible winter backcountry use and we hope that everyone can safely enjoy the outdoors while also caring for the places that facilitate those experiences. We also celebrate recent successful endeavors; including a long-awaited trail connector, our new online mapping project, and a new community farm that addresses food insecurities in the valley.

Finally, I want to remind everyone that Open Space is Open this winter and I hope to see you all out on the trail with frost on your eyelashes and smiles on your faces.

Respectfully,

Jake Jones Executive Director

GLACIER COMMUNITY FARM:

ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY THROUGH LAND CONSERVATION

The Crested Butte Land Trust promotes land conservation and stewardship in various ways; through the protection of wildlife habitats, by providing recreational opportunities, and by establishing and maintaining relationships with ranchers and conservation landowners. This year, the Crested Butte Land Trust recognized another opportunity to utilize its best practices in open space stewardship: by putting on its farming hat and addressing the community's needs around food insecurity.

Although food insecurity has been a growing issue in the Gunnison Valley in recent years, this spring's arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic brought it to the forefront and prompted the Crested Butte Land Trust to optimize one of its properties in order to address the community's need for access to local food.

Glacier Community Farm is located on a Crested Butte Land Trust property that used to serve as a ranching homestead near the intersection of Cement Creek Road and Highway 135, just outside the entrance to Crested Butte South. The Crested Butte Land Trust partnered with Mountain Roots Food Project to establish a farm on the property for the 2020 growing season, with the resulting crops going to Mountain Roots' various programs that provide food to those in need. With the funding support from the Land Trust, generous donors and help from volunteers, the team prepared the property, organized the garden infrastructure, and planted short-season, cold-weather crops that could last into the fall growing months, including kale, spinach, arugula, lettuce, radishes, and red mustard greens. The team harvested more than 200 pounds of food this season, all of which went directly to Mountain Roots' food programs like its free neighborhood markets, home-box delivery, and farm-to-school programs.





GLACIER COMMUNITY FARM



The community was also invited to participate in volunteer days at the farm, helping to harvest the crops and prepare the land for next year's growing season. "We're so grateful to the volunteers who have come out to Glacier Community Farm," said Mountain Roots Community Farmer Jen Dews. "It wouldn't be possible without their help, and we're happy to have the community's involvement. The potential that this property has for growing food and for teaching the community is exponential. We're creating change-makers. That's the most valuable outcome you can have for a space like that."

Through a fellowship program with Mountain Roots, Western Colorado University Master in Environmental Management program student Kara Williard is working to develop long-term goals and design a master plan for the farm. "It has been an amazing opportunity to be a part of Glacier Community Farm working in collaboration with the Crested Butte Land Trust and Mountain Roots," said Williard. "Our work at this historic site is not only beneficial for the land's health by promoting regenerative agriculture, but it also helps to address issues of food insecurity in the Gunnison Valley." This winter, Williard will lead

the team to prepare the farm for the 2021 growing season and look at possible infrastructure that will help extend growing opportunities in the winter months. She will also help the Crested Butte Land Trust and Mountain Roots implement tactics that will establish a longstanding future for Glacier Community Farm.

"Our goal with Glacier Community Farm is to increase food production and give it to those in our community who need it most," said Crested Butte Land Trust Stewardship Manager Brian Lieberman, who shares that the Crested Butte Land Trust is actively seeking funding and grant opportunities to help grow the farm project. "We know there's a direct need to increase and expand this project and we intend to continue it in perpetuity."

"We were able to generate the best possible outcome on that property by assessing the needs of the community and working with our stakeholders," said Crested Butte Land Trust Executive Director Jake Jones. "Glacier Community Farm has given us the opportunity to both help our neighbors during these uncertain times, and to educate the community about land regeneration and conservation."



photos: **Kara Williard, Peter Horgan, Cheryl Cwelich**

MAPPING OUR CONSERVED LANDS: UTILIZING GIS MAPPING IN LAND CONSERVATION

Land conservation is complicated; we at the Crested Butte Land Trust understand that the scope and complexity of our work can be confusing. Since its inception, the Crested Butte Land Trust has conserved more than 6,000 acres in the Gunnison Valley with the mission to protect and preserve wildlife, recreation, ranching, and scenic views. But how we got there is a little more complex than that, and this year we sought to better illustrate our role in land conservation through the power of geographic information system (GIS) mapping.

GIS, a framework for gathering, managing, and analyzing data, is most commonly used to produce data visuals in the form of a map. "GIS mapping can be a very valuable tool in land conservation," said Crested Butte Land Trust Stewardship Coordinator Peter Horgan. "A lot of folks don't know where our properties are located and what exactly our work entails, so we wanted to put together a proper program that would communicate our various roles in land conservation and advance our message across to the community."

Our new interactive map on the Crested Butte Land Trust website showcases the various conserved properties that the Crested Butte Land Trust owns or on which it holds conservation

easements. It also highlights how we interact with adjoining properties, trails and public lands. Users can click on different properties to learn more information, including details on who owns the parcel, how much acreage the property covers, and whether or not public access is allowed within those boundaries.

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photo: David Dieckhaus

"At the end of the day, human connection to the land is what drives conservation in the Gunnison Valley. The boundaries on the ground between private conserved open space and public lands are often invisible. Mapping those boundaries is a powerful way for the public to understand how the Crested Butte Land Trust has conserved not just individual parcels of land, but entire landscapes for people, wildlife and working ranches."

-JAKE JONES

Crested Butte Land Trust Executive Director



CONNECTIVITY THROUGH COLLABORATION: NEW COAL TRAIN TRAIL GETS RECREATIONAL USERS OFF THE ROAD AND ON THE TRAIL

Whether you've taken a stroll down the Woods Walk, cooled off in the river at Gunsight Bridge, mountain biked Lower Loop, camped at Oh Be Joyful campground, or hiked up to Oh Be Joyful Falls, chances are you've enjoyed the beloved, recreational haven of the Slate River Valley.

The popularity of this local Crested Butte drainage, combined with Slate River Road being the access point to its various recreational opportunities, highlighted the issues in mixing increased recreation use with vehicle traffic on Slate River Road. With no connection between Oh Be Joyful Campground to the Gunsight Bridge other than Slate River Road, hikers and bikers were limited to using the road alongside cars to access the nearby trails.

"One of the goals of mine reclamation is establishing a beneficial use for the property following the reclamation of that land."

-TARA TAFI

Senior Project Manager/Reclamation Specialist
Colorado Division of Reclamation Mining & Safety

In partnership with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Crested Butte Land Trust wanted to find a way to expand trail connectivity that would reduce traffic on the road and increase safety for non-motorized users. "It's difficult having those mixed uses on the road, so we wanted to build a trail that would connect to Oh Be Joyful and get pedestrian and bike traffic off the road," said BLM Gunnison Field Office Lead Outdoor Recreation Planner Kristi Murphy.

A new trail was in order - one that would connect Oh Be Joyful Campground to the Gunsight Bridge. In fact, this route would complete the non-motorized connection between downtown Crested Butte and the Raggeds Wilderness. Also in order - the collaboration of the many stakeholders invested in that particular area. "We value the many aspects that come with land conservation: recreation, ranching, wildlife, and habitat," said Crested Butte Land Trust Stewardship Manager Brian Lieberman. "So before we begin designing and building something like a new trail, we check in with all those represented players to collaborate on what works for everyone involved."

The new trail needed to coexist with a nearby cattle load-out area operated by the Allen Family Ranch. "The cattle load-out structure is really important for

the Allen's ranching operations to direct and transport their cattle across the valley. We collaborated closely with the Allen Family to ensure the recreational impacts from the new trail would be minimized to their agricultural operation," said Lieberman.

The new trail is also located on the site of the old 1884 Anthracite Mesa Mine, an area that has now been restored from leftover coal debris as part of the Smith Hill Reclamation Project conducted by the Colorado Division of Reclamation Mining & Safety (CDRMS). In order to understand how to maintain the integrity of the reclaimed wetlands on the site with the least amount of impact, CDRMS collaborated with the Crested Butte Land Trust and contributed funding to the project.

"One of the goals of mine reclamation is establishing a beneficial use for the property following the reclamation of that land," said Tara Tafi, Senior Project Manager/Reclamation Specialist for CDRMS. "When there was an opportunity to create a trail through an area we had reclaimed, we wanted to support that effort."

The Crested Butte Mountain Biking Association (CBMBA) was another instrumental partner, leading the charge in building the trail. "We rely on the Crested Butte Land Trust and the BLM for these amazing recreation amenities, and here's the next step and opportunity to get people out of their cars," said CBMBA Executive Director Dave Ochs. "We were very honored they looked to us to put the trail together. This was probably the most comprehensive trail we've ever built. It's inviting for all users and all abilities."

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photos: **Brian Lieberman**



BRACE FOR IMPACT:

PRACTICING RESPONSIBLE RECREATION ON CONSERVED LANDS THIS WINTER



The Crested Butte Land Trust is proud to help provide access to the valley's winter recreational paradise, as many of the area's winter recreational opportunities begin on or run through our conserved properties. We recognize that winter may look a little different this year with the uncertainty ushered in by the global pandemic, but the Crested Butte Land Trust also strives to keep our open spaces open and allow our community the much-needed solace and fulfillment that comes from recreating outside.

In recent years, backcountry access and Nordic skiing have become ever-expanding components of Crested Butte winter recreation and as use continues to increase, it will also continue to have an impact on our conserved lands. Intentional management of these spaces among our valley-wide partners combined with respectful trail users is crucial as we anticipate more backcountry use this winter and beyond.

"While we encourage our community to utilize the outdoor opportunities in Crested Butte's Nordic trails

system and backcountry this winter, we ask folks to be more mindful of their impacts and their surroundings than ever before," says Crested Butte Land Trust Executive Director Jakes Jones. "By practicing attentive trail stewardship, you're helping us to not only mitigate the increased recreational use we anticipate this winter, but also to help us fulfill our mission in protecting our conserved lands for future generations."

Some of the area's most popular winter trails that overlap with Crested Butte Land Trust property include the Nordic trail system maintained and managed by Crested Butte Nordic. "All of our trails are conserved through the Crested Butte Land Trust, the Town of Crested Butte, private landowners, or other agencies like the Forest Service and BLM," said Crested Butte Nordic Executive Director Christie Hicks. "All of those properties allow for public recreation and a continuous trail system in the winter, and it's really the community that benefits from that. We have made plans for the Nordic trails to be there no matter what happens this winter, and ask that the community does its part in return."

photo: Lydia Stern

The Crested Butte Avalanche Center advises backcountry users to recreate responsibly by seeking the education, resources, and snow forecasts prior to venturing out on the trails.

"We expect a significant uptick in backcountry users and are prepared for it by expanding our messaging and public presence," said Crested Butte Avalanche Center Executive Director Than Acuff. "But it really comes down to the users taking the time to gather important information regarding snowpack, weather and avalanche conditions prior to heading into the mountains to ensure safe travel through the mountains."

Whether a local or visitor, the Crested Butte Land Trust hopes you'll help us mitigate impacts to our cherished trails and open space by practicing thoughtful trail etiquette, responsible backcountry use, and respect for the conserved lands and adjacent neighborhoods at trailheads.

Despite the many uncertainties of this year's winter season, the Crested Butte Land Trust is grateful to its community of supporters and stakeholders that make winter recreation on our conserved lands possible. It's because of your generous support and contributions that allow us to continuously improve and preserve the lands we all hold dear. This winter, we hope you enjoy recreating in these spaces, with a mindfulness and responsibility to protect them for future winters to come.



photo: **Nathan Bilow**

Winter Recreation & Trail Etiquette:

Check the backcountry forecast, including weather, snow conditions, and avalanche danger BEFORE you go out: cbavalanchecenter.org

To minimize parking traffic, walk, bike, or bus when possible to nearby trailheads.

Be respectful of surrounding neighborhoods at trailheads, and only park in designated parking areas without blocking right-of-ways or driveways.

Plan your trip at less popular times to avoid overcrowded trailheads and trails.

Be mindful of other users on the trail, know who has the right-of-way, and bring a buff or face covering in case of close encounters with others.

Keep dogs under voice control and ALWAYS pick up after your dog. Never leave dog bags on the trail and have a way to carry out the waste.

Stay on marked trails, don't trespass onto private property, and keep motorized vehicles on designated roads.

Pick up after yourself; leave the trails and trailheads better than you found them.

Bring proper gear and safety equipment.

Be aware of other users in the area and know that your decisions can have consequences beyond your group.

A man with a backpack and camera on a tripod in a forest.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

JOHN HOLDER: VISUAL STORYTELLER

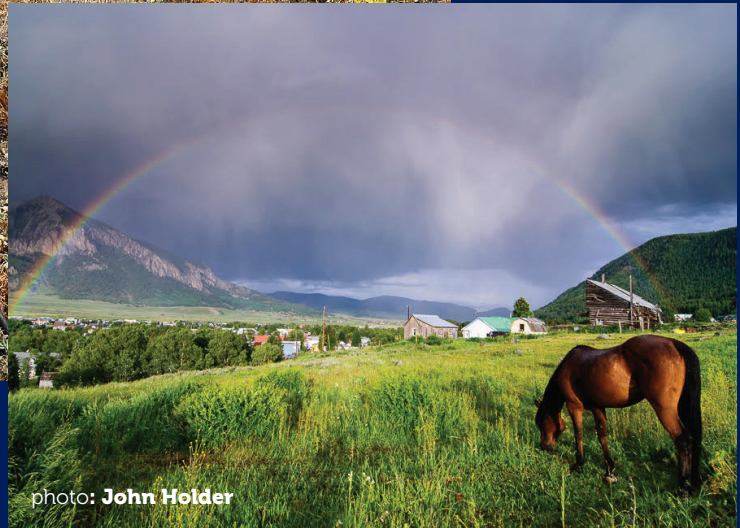
courtesy photo

Year after year, we at the Crested Butte Land Trust are humbled by the volunteer support from our community. Whether you've spent time getting your hands dirty in the ground with our stewardship team, helped out at one of our fundraising events, or simply made a donation toward one of our conservation projects, we are grateful for our volunteers and proud that you share our mission to uphold a legacy of land conservation in the Gunnison Valley.

One such community member is John Holder, who has been donating his photography to the Crested Butte Land Trust since 2013. A longtime Crested Butte local, John has offered his time as a photographer to capture the scenic landscapes of the Crested Butte Land Trust's conserved properties. From Long Lake to the Slate River Valley, from wildflower-popping summers to snowy winters, John has helped document some of the Crested Butte Land Trust's most treasured viewsheds.

A picture certainly is worth a thousand words, and John's photography not only captures the beauty and essence of our unique valley but has also allowed the Crested Butte Land Trust to convey our efforts and mission of protecting open spaces through the art of visual storytelling.

The mountains brought John here in 1974, and his passion for photography has allowed him to share



his view of the Gunnison Valley with the greater community. "It's an extremely important thing, the work that the Crested Butte Land Trust does. It's a whole other feeling when you come into this valley, and see all the open space and ranches here rather than a bunch of development," he said on his inspiration for donating his photography. "What makes this place so unique is the amount of land we have preserved, and the Crested Butte Land Trust is a huge part of that." John is a Physician Assistant at Gunnison Valley Family Physicians and enjoys utilizing the area's conserved lands by mountain biking, skiing the Nordic trails, and of course, through his photography.

"The Land Trust has relied on visual storytelling to connect our supporters to the lands they love for the past 29 years and John's contribution is a proud continuation of that tradition," said Crested Butte Land Trust Executive Director Jake Jones. "Photos as much as words and personal experiences have brought conserved lands to life for a lot of people, and John's photography has allowed us to share our story so vividly."

"Thank you, John, for bringing our mission to life with your captivating images," said Jones.

MAPPING OUR PRESERVED LANDS: UTILIZING GIS MAPPING IN LAND CONSERVATION

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"The GIS map is a very digestible, user-friendly tool for understanding the breadth of the Crested Butte Land Trust's impact in our community," said Horgan. "Anyone can see how many different parcels we've conserved over the years and what we have planned for the future."

Crested Butte Land Trust Executive Director Jake Jones further

states, "At the end of the day, human connection to the land is what drives conservation in the Gunnison Valley. The boundaries on the ground between private conserved open space and public lands are often invisible. Mapping those boundaries is a powerful way for the public to understand how the Crested Butte Land Trust has conserved not just individual parcels of land, but entire landscapes for people, wildlife and working ranches."

We value our supporters near and far and are grateful we can offer this tool for our generous community, especially if this year did not allow you to enjoy our conserved lands in person. We invite you to explore our online map, delve into the various properties, garner inspiration for your next outdoor venture, and learn through the power of maps how your support has made a positive impact on land conservation.

CONNECTIVITY THROUGH COLLABORATION

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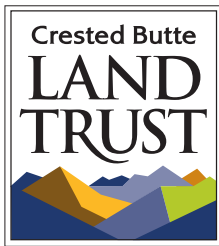
Named the Coal Train Trail as a nod to the area's mining history, the new trail is a half-mile, beginner level trail, incorporating water crossings, fence rollovers and a bench cut to accommodate both ranching needs and wetlands preservation. Completed this fall, the Crested Butte Land Trust will plan to commemorate its grand opening in the spring of 2021. To accommodate cattle operations, as with many of the trails in the Gunnison Valley, the newly created trail will also undergo closures for several weeks in the late summer and fall.

"This new Coal Train Trail is intended to reduce traffic on Slate River Road," said Murphy. "This trail can create an epic day for families to ride up to Oh Be Joyful, hike up to the falls and then ride back to town, all without using any roads. It also allows people camping at Oh Be Joyful to ride into town on their bicycles or hike, and it provides connectivity to the GB Loop and Lower Loop as well."

As a result of collaboration, donor contributions and community support, the Coal Train Trail will help fulfill the mission echoed by the various stakeholders involved; creating better experiences on conserved lands.

"We've been able to take funding and contributions that we've all received and leverage it toward a goal that suits all of our mission statements," said Tafi. "The collaboration between non-profits like the Crested Butte Land Trust with the state and federal agencies is really special and something that we should all be proud of."

"The Coal Train Trail helps us provide improved recreational opportunities for future generations, all while celebrating our past, conserving our precious lands, and embracing the partnerships that make it possible to do so," said Crested Butte Land Trust Executive Director Jake Jones.



**P.O. Box 2224
Crested Butte, CO 81224**

scenic views

wildlife

recreation

ranching

970.349.1206
cblandtrust.org

2021 SUMMER EVENTS

A Starry Evening with the Crested Butte Land Trust / July 10*

Enjoy incredible scenery, delicious food, and mingle with friends and neighbors who support conservation in the Gunnison Valley

Register at www.cblandtrust.org/starryevening

For more information: contact Rachel Griego at 970.349.1206 or rachel@cblandtrust.org

Caddis Cup Fly Fishing Tournament / July 16-17*

Cement Creek Ranch Kick-Off Party and an action-packed day of fishing with great food and libations

Register at www.cblandtrust.org/caddiscup

For more information: contact Rachel Griego at 970.349.1206 or rachel@cblandtrust.org

**subject to change*



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photo: **Constance Mahoney**