

THIS IS YOUR PLACE

protecting the present for the future™



2020 Summer Newsletter

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A MESSAGE FROM THE **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** **COVID-19: DOES OPEN SPACE MATTER?**

If you had told me that I would be spending half of my waking life for two months on Zoom calls and teleconferences, I would have said you are crazy. Yet here we are, living out a very different version of life than what we anticipated for a milestone year like 2020. Uncertainty and anxiety, limitations and isolation are words that dominate our social consciousness. In a season where time spent in the mountains is ordinarily a celebration, we have seen a dramatic shift in our sentiment towards the big adventures that await us in the Gunnison Valley. The highway signs along 50 and 135 read "Save a Life, Stay Home." Many of our Board members, supporters, volunteers, and friends have been asked to temporarily remain in their primary residences to protect the health of others. **In this time, does Open Space matter?**

Yes. Open Space matters, but not just because it is a place where we dream to return with our family and friends on the other side of this. The Gunnison Valley is renowned for its vistas, trails, wildlife and ranching, and these seem like indelible components of the land, forever etched into the make up this place. But the reality is that all it takes to lose the beloved character of this place is to stop caring.

By caring, I mean caring for one another, for the relationships that are strained by the challenges facing this community. Strong relationships lead to wise decision making where each viewpoint is considered. Each decision we make during these uncertain times charts a course towards a future of our own making. The land is what drew us here, and protecting the vistas, trails, wildlife and ranches of the Gunnison Valley requires that we care for each other first.

The decision to carry these ideals forward will have profound impacts on how we live, work, play and give back to this amazing place. No one individual



has all the answers, and it is through our collective effort that we find success. Enclosed you will find such examples of caring and the triumphs that come by working together to protect this place that you love. The great work does not stop with those highlighted in the following pages. You matter. We want to hear from you as we plan for the future of community-driven conservation in the Gunnison Valley. We will be sharing how you can contribute your voice to our decision making for the years ahead. The Crested Butte Land Trust is your place.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Noel Durant".

Noel Durant Executive Director



LONG LAKE LAND EXCHANGE A SUCCESS

A WIN-WIN-WIN
CONSERVATION PROJECT

photo: **Trevor Bona**

This year, thanks to your support, the Crested Butte Land Trust completed the final chapter of a decade-long effort in the permanent protection of nearly 1,000 acres of land in the Gunnison Valley with the closing of the Long Lake Land Exchange. This multi-year endeavor culminated with the exchange of land between the Trust for Public Land, the Crested Butte Land Trust, and the Forest Service permanently protecting the eastern half of Long Lake, a beloved community asset, and adding a key inholding in the Gunnison National Forest northeast of Gunnison.

The exchange improves access to the public lands of the Gunnison National Forest, provides local and responsive stewardship of Long Lake, and generates significant funding for affordable housing in the Gunnison Valley. Now that Long Lake is locally protected, the Crested Butte Land Trust

will collaboratively manage access to Long Lake with the neighboring Allen Ranch to provide sustainable recreation opportunities while protecting wildlife habitat and critical migration routes along with a key agricultural corridor for local ranchers to graze their cows.

“The closing of this highly unique land exchange provides the Valley Housing Fund with critically needed funding for future collaborative affordable housing projects. We sincerely thank our exchange partners for turning this ambitious idea into a reality. This was the Land Trust’s largest fund raising effort and they succeeded! Thanks to all who donated to this incredible effort!”

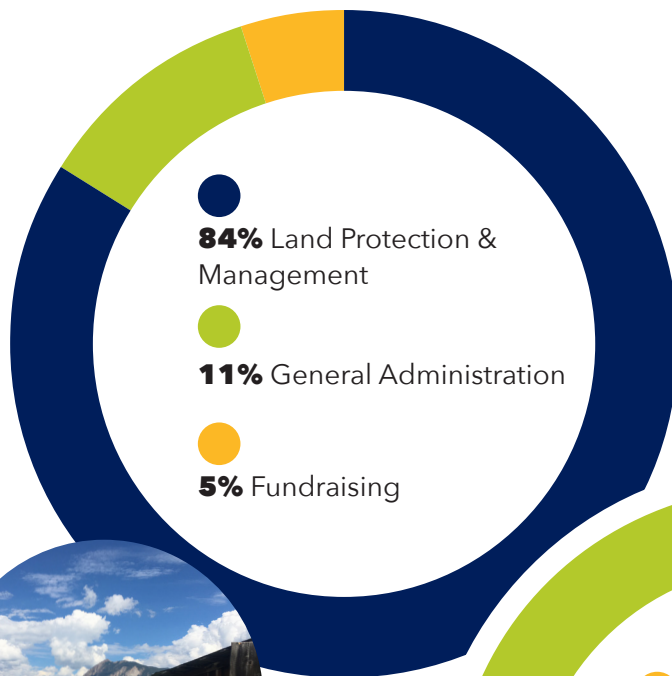
–**Jim Starr**, Chair, the Valley Housing Fund

“The innovative generosity and forethought that kickstarted this effort combined with the plucky fundraising that closed it out is a reflection of the remarkable land ethic native to the Gunnison Valley. I’m honored the U.S. Forest Service could play a part in it seeing it through.”

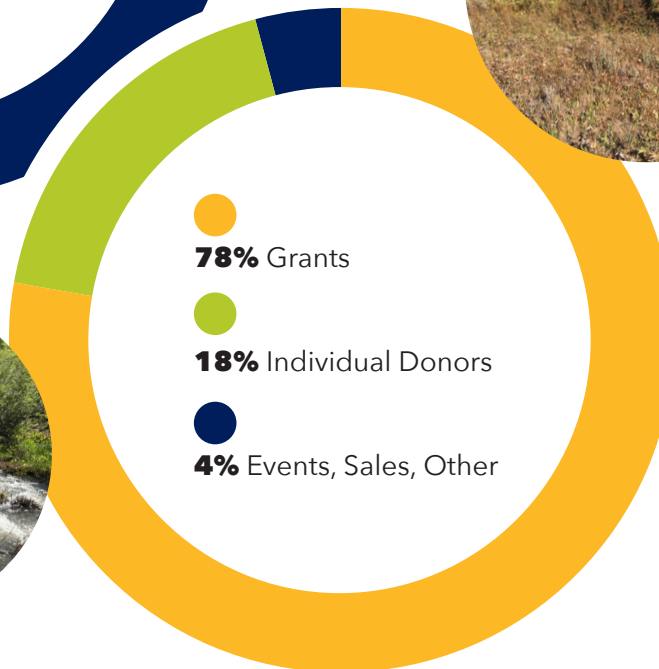
–**Matt McCombs**, District Ranger for the U.S. Forest Service

BY THE NUMBERS

YOUR GIVING PROTECTS THE GUNNISON VALLEY YOU LOVE



CRESTED
BUTTE LAND
TRUST
EXPENSES



CRESTED
BUTTE LAND
TRUST
INCOME

SEE YOUR IMPACT ON OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION
THROUGH THE LAND TRUST'S WORK IN 2019

- / **4,460 feet** of ditch improved to carry water to our 88 acres of conserved hay meadows
- / **2,905 feet** of fencing replaced to protect sensitive restoration sites
- / **1,300 recreators** engaged at Gunsight Bridge to share the importance of responsible recreation on conserved lands and waters
- / **910 acres** treated for noxious weeds
- / **587 people** gave to protect open space in the Gunnison Valley
- / **400 hours** of wildlife study of the Great Blue Heronry
- / **120 miles** walked monitoring conserved properties



THE PEANUT LAKE CORRIDOR

ADAPTING OUR LAND MANAGEMENT TO INCREASED RECREATIONAL PRESSURES

photo: **Brian Lieberman**

The Peanut Lake Road corridor is one of Crested Butte's crown jewels for recreation with its access to the Wood's Walk and Lower Loop trails and Nordic skiing trails in the winter. As one of the more accessible areas to recreate near town, this scenic road has experienced increased recreational pressure over the years, and with that, the threat of losing its status as one of the most inspiring corridors in the Gunnison Valley.

In an effort to minimize the impact on the conserved lands and trails of the Peanut Lake Road corridor, the Crested Butte Land Trust partnered with the Town of Crested Butte, Crested Butte Nordic, and Gunnison County to encourage responsible use as part of the Sustainable Tourism & Outdoor Recreation (STOR) committee.

With a focus on funding and management strategies for the corridor, the partners also wanted to involve the community - the people that use these trails the most - in the plans. A crucial piece of feedback that emerged from a community forum event included growing concern for the increased traffic on Peanut Lake Road and the upper parking lot. "There was overwhelming support from the community for more management activities that would reduce vehicle traffic on the road," said Crested Butte Land Trust Stewardship Manager Brian Lieberman. "Folks were on board to find a way to accommodate the additional recreational pressures we've seen there over the years."

Through key funding in 2019 from the Town of Crested Butte, STOR, the Land Trust Alliance, and the Gunnison County Metropolitan Recreation District (Met Rec), the Crested Butte Land Trust increased signage informing trail users about updated parking regulations. "Right off the bat this project aligned really well with the type of recreation initiative Met Rec supports," said Met Rec

District Manager Hedda Peterson. "It met a lot of Met Rec's grant criteria and was the perfect example of collaborative work, bringing everyone who has a role in managing the area to the table."

New signs installed this past year designate the upper Peanut Lake parking lot for adaptive users and others who can't make it to the upper trailhead without a car. They also ask that all other trail users minimize vehicle traffic on Peanut Lake Road and to park in town or at the south Lower Loop trailhead.

"It was also important to work with our neighbors on Peanut Lake Road. They're the ones who see it all," said Lieberman. "After last summer's changes, they've been very complimentary about the improvements, and hopefully those improvements will continue as the community and visitors see the signage and mold to the new corridor."

This summer, the Crested Butte Land Trust plans to put in a new trailhead sign with trail descriptions, maps and road rules, as well as reconfigure the parking area on the south lower loop trailhead. The Crested Butte Land Trust is also working with the community and local businesses in town to instill a message to more people looking for a great open space experience that Peanut Lake Road is best enjoyed out of the car.

"It's been a fantastic partnership with the Crested Butte Land Trust to allow folks to get outside and enjoy the trails on these protected and conserved lands," said Crested Butte Nordic Executive Director Christie Hicks. "I think we're seeing that, especially now, how important it is to have those access opportunities for our health and well-being. With that access comes impact, so it's crucial to be part of a group that's trying to maintain that for recreational users."

A photograph showing a dirt area next to a road, cluttered with construction debris and weeds. Orange traffic cones are placed along the edge of the road. In the background, there are buildings and a forested hillside under a cloudy sky.

BEFORE

A photograph showing the same area after restoration. The ground is now dark, tilled soil with some native grasses starting to grow. A stone wall has been built along the edge of the road. The background remains the same, with buildings and a forested hillside under a clear blue sky.

AFTER

CONSERVATION IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

RESTORING THE RED LADY AVENUE
CONSERVATION EASEMENT

photos: **Brian Lieberman**

When it comes to land conservation in the Gunnison Valley, open fields dotted with grazing cows and rolling hills lined with recreational trails typically come to mind. But just as crucial are those unsung spaces hidden in plain sight that reveal some of the most important conservation partnerships that your support makes possible.

Enter the Kubricht property, owned by Win and Anda Craven of Trapper's Crossing. A 5.3-acre portion of their property is protected by a conservation easement and includes a trail enjoyed by summer and winter recreators. However, the parcel, adjacent to Town's industrial Red Lady Avenue, has been used for unregulated dumping, snow storage, and illegal camping. As supporters of the Crested Butte Land Trust, Win and Anda felt a sense of responsibility and commitment not only to take care of their property, but also to find opportunities to change community behaviors by restoring this open space.

"We wanted to improve the viewshed from both above and below because it was a bit of an eyesore from construction debris and weed overgrowth," said Win. "We had to take a different tactic and try to impress on people the value of that parcel, how it's more valuable as a buffer zone rather than a construction dumping area."

This past fall, the Crested Butte Land Trust worked with the Cravens on a restoration plan that would encourage native vegetation growth and help provide a natural buffer from the town. The Town Marshal's office came on board to put up signage to limit parking, and Alpine

Lumber Company, Al's Backhoe Service, and neighbors helped excavate the site to get rid of construction debris, rubble, and weed overgrowth. The soil was then tilled with compost and fertilizer and planted with native grasses.

This summer marks the restoration site's first growing season, and while it may take several years, the land is headed in the right direction. "Restoration projects in areas that have been highly impacted sometimes require several attempts and adaptive management," said Crested Butte Land Trust Stewardship Manager Brian Lieberman. "These things often take a little work, but we'll keep up our restoration activities on that lot."

"It's a small piece of land but it's important," said Win. I'm looking forward to seeing our progress this summer and in the future." Moving forward, the Cravens and the Crested Butte Land Trust hope to collaborate on how to stabilize the area from erosion along the summer trail.

"This piece of land right in town was often viewed as a forgotten piece of open space, and we're so grateful that Win and Anda see the importance of protecting it in the long run," said Crested Butte Land Trust Executive Director Noel Durant. "As a result of this restoration project, we've seen a change in behavior in our neighbors. All of this hinges on those beneficial partnerships with the landowners to come up with solutions to protect the land for generations to come." By supporting the work of the Crested Butte Land Trust you're ensuring nature is a constant part of life in Crested Butte, from those spectacular scenic vistas to the neighborhood green spaces.



photos courtesy: **Jim Watson**

KEEPING A CONNECTION THROUGH INTERGENERATIONAL GIVING

The Crested Butte Land Trust often talks about preserving the present for the future, something we're fortunate to witness regularly through our land stewards, generous donors, property owner partnerships, and the greater community of the Gunnison Valley. Though we may vary in our contributions and responsibilities, our common thread is the desire to forever protect our quality of life, and pass that torch to the generations that succeed us.

The Watson family began coming to Crested Butte in the 1980s, having fallen in love with so much of what draws any of us here - the rich and quirky history, the outdoor recreation, and the deep sense of connection to nature and open space. The family's Crested Butte house was always their home away from home as they made multiple winter and summer trips to the valley every year from Dallas. To this day, three generations later, the family still views their Crested Butte home as the centerpiece of their lives.

"It brings me and my family such joy to be living in maybe the prettiest place in the world," said Jim Watson. "It's been the place that's been so significant in our lives, and the Land Trust is a big piece of that." Jim encouraged his kids, Monty and Jennifer, to learn about the Crested Butte Land Trust over the years. "They appear to have assimilated the responsibilities and then welcomed the opportunities to support our little basin, and pay it back a little bit for all the immense joy and pleasure that we've been offered."

"The Land Trust has just always been a part of the conversation in our family when talking about Crested Butte and the access we have to open spaces and how we can't ever take that for granted," said Jennifer Mouritsen, who now lives in Singapore with her husband Mark and has two daughters in college. "My parents definitely instilled a culture of giving back to your community and that's something that I've lived by my whole life."

Jennifer and her brother Monty recall hikes along Peanut Lake Road and playing in the Slate River as kids, places that the Crested Butte Land Trust has ensured to protect, and they've watched their own children do the same. "My kids have grown up here, and they love it," said Monty Watson.

"And teaching them about supporting the Land Trust is just one of the great ways to say thank you to those people who let you use their land."

"It's really thanks to the Land Trust and its projects that we have access to the trails my family and I love," said Jennifer. "From our family's house in Crested Butte, we can just walk out the front door, hop on our bikes or take a walk, and immediately enjoy the glorious mountain trails - whether hiking the Lower Loop or taking a picnic to enjoy by Slate River. I will never take for granted having access to these glorious trails right at our doorstep."

The Watson family has supported the Crested Butte Land Trust in their own individual ways throughout the years, from financial donations, sharing the Crested Butte Land Trust's mission with friends, and Jim authoring *Bring Your Pocketbook: A History and Handbook of Saving Open Space in Gunnison County, Colorado*, edited by family members including his granddaughter Mae. "I believe my family really welcomes the opportunity to support the Land Trust, and I see that continuing with my grandkids," said Jim. "We have a perpetual obligation - as people, as a town, as a community - and the only way we can fulfill that is to get our kids and grandkids hitched up to this hay wagon as well."

The Watsons' ties to Crested Butte are more important these days than ever before, with family members spread across time zones and countries. This valley not only allows them to reconvene as a family, but connects them even more deeply because of their investment in the place they love.



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scenic views wildlife recreation ranching

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cblandtrust.org

**OPEN
SPACE
IS
OPEN**



OpenSpacelsOpen

There are very few places that have such an innate connection to the land as the Gunnison Valley, and because of you, we can enjoy what the land provides even in the most unsettling of times. So please, get out there, enjoy what this place provides, and share your gratitude with these lands and others by posting your experiences with the hash tag **#OpenSpacelsOpen**

photo: **Jack Starkebaum**