



THIS IS **YOUR PLACE**

2022 WINTER NEWSLETTER

Message from the Executive Director
Conserving Mt. Emmons
Collaborative Conservation and Long Lake
Supporter Spotlight

photo: John Holder

A MESSAGE

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JAKE JONES



Mt. Emmons looms large in the consciousness of our community. The mountain's physical presence above Crested Butte creates an unparalleled backdrop to a small town that has fought to remain independent while seeking a sense of harmony between our industrial past and a more verdant future. The physical contours of Mt. Emmons are hard to ignore, and it provides countless opportunities to connect with nature, whether through the visual appreciation of its beauty or the physical challenge of ascending its slopes. It is no surprise that this mountain is also the subject of a multi - decade struggle to protect our water, habitat, and economy. The effort to keep Red Lady mine - free, thus protecting the quality of our environment and way of life, has been a consistent rallying cry for the community since the 1970s.

The hike up Mt. Emmons with skis on my feet and a pack on my back has been the centerpiece of many cold, clear mornings throughout my life. I have shared the climb to the summit of the iconic mountain with countless friends over the decades. Now after so many trips to the summit amid years of uncertainty about a molybdenum mine on the mountain, the future of Mt. Emmons is finally becoming clear. Through a federal land exchange and conservation easement, Mt. Emmons will be mine - free forever, and the legacy of past mine development will be carefully managed in perpetuity.

Traveling in the mountains in winter can be dangerous. The threat of cold temperatures, wind, avalanche, and risk of injury are always a consider ration when venturing into the backcountry. Such adventures are better done with a partner, someone to help make decisions who has your back in case the tour doesn't go as planned. Good partners are essential to a well executed backcountry adventure, just as they are in life and business.

With partners, good ideas can become great ideas, and successful partnerships are nothing new for the Crested Butte Land Trust. Over thirty years of land conservation couldn't have happened without a long history of cooperative work. Another prime example of collaborative conservation highlighted in this newsletter is Long Lake, the beautiful swimminghole treasured by locals and visitors alike. After nearly five years of work, we have many individuals and organizations to thank for first saving and now managing the public access to Long Lake.

Now, our community is on the cusp of saving another local treasure by extinguishing the threat of a large mine in our watershed. Our ski tips are metaphorically poised at the edge of Red Lady Bowl, we've done the leg work and assessed the risks; our decision making process was collaborative, and the next step is to make that first turn. Fortunately the Land Trust has great partners in navigating the journey of conserving Mt. Emmons: the United States Forest Service, Mt. Emmons Mining Company, Gunnison County, the Town of Crested Butte, High Country Conservation Advocates, and Coal Creek Watershed Coalition. Success on this adventure will be defined by a collaborative community effort aligning the goals of private industry, local government, and nonprofits. The summit is within reach, and the glory of success will be shared by all.


Jake Jones
Executive Director

CONSERVING MT. EMMONS

COMMUNITY CLIMBS CLOSER TO PUTTING PERMANENT END TO MINING ON RED LADY

BY BELLA BIONDINI

When Myles Rademan arrived in Crested Butte in 1972, it was nearly a ghost town. Crested Butte, with a history of coal mining and prospectors in search of silver and gold, once buzzed with activity, but it had quieted.

Hired as town planner, Rademan worked with his partners to draft an alternative future for Crested Butte. It would be built on skiing, tourism and pristine wilderness areas, taking advantage of the valley's abundant natural resources in a different way. But mining giant AMAX arrived without warning, eyes set on Mt. Emmons, locally known as Red Lady – a monarch of the Crested Butte valley.

It had been more than 20 years since the Big Mine, which by 1902 had become the third largest coal mine in Colorado, had closed. The international mining corporation shared its plans to extract 300 million tons of molybdenum ore from Mt. Emmons, displaying images of criss-crossed rail and power lines, mountains reduced to rubble and valleys filled with waste rock. It was a scale so different from what the town grew up with that there would be nothing left by the time they were finished, Rademan said.

Motivated by a common vision of a mine-free Crested Butte, the small but determined community stood against the mine.

“We were very influenced by people like David Brower, who tried to save the Grand Canyon,” Rademan said. “He said ‘would you flood the Sistine Chapel? No, you wouldn’t.’ We said ‘why would you mine Crested Butte?’ It’s the same kind of thing. Here’s a national treasure to begin with and you’re going to change everything.”

This would not be an overnight battle, but Crested Butte won in the sense that “we were able to hold them up,” he said.

Now the future Rademan and the community envisioned might finally be coming to fruition nearly 50 years later. This past summer, the Town of Crested Butte and the Gunnison County Commissioners voiced their support for a final draft of a conservation easement negotiated between the now-owners of the property, the Mount Emmons Mining Company (MEMC), and the Crested Butte Land Trust. The easement will prevent future mining and development and maintain recreational access on Red Lady – highly desired goals for generations.

MEMC, which is a subsidiary of Freeport McMoRan, has become the “willing landowner” the Land Trust needs—a critical trigger to making conservation possible, said Executive Director Jake Jones.

“Having a landowner partner like Freeport McMoRan, one of largest mining companies in the world, is fairly

intimidating,” Jones said. “For the Land Trust to have the ability to negotiate and hold an easement of this importance is a sign of our organization’s strength generated over the past three decades.”

Once finalized, the conservation easement will accompany a land exchange between the U.S. Forest Service and MEMC. Under the agreement, the Forest Service will exchange 550 acres of public lands adjacent to the Keystone Mine for more than 600 valuable acres owned by the mining company.

Under the MEMC’s original draft, the conservation easement was only applied to the upper part of Mt. Emmons, not the lower – the portion that the company would acquire through the exchange. The community feared the public lands, then turned private, would still be at risk.

After careful negotiation, the Land Trust expanded the agreement to the entire property, a move that will make it much more difficult to mine or develop the lands after the exchange. The public, who has been historically trespassing on Mt. Emmons for decades, will also finally gain legal access to Red Lady Bowl, while the mine would gain more operational flexibility for ongoing remediation work.

“The land exchange and conservation easement is a very good deal for the community,” Jones said.

Although the land gained by the Forest Service in the exchange contains high-quality habitat for the Canada lynx and the Gunnison sage grouse, the most prominent parcel is Ohio Creek’s Three Peaks Ranch. The public will acquire a 160 acre private inholding surrounded by the Gunnison National Forest. Inholdings can often result in

fragmentation and resource damage, allowing private developers to build roads through public lands to reach their property. Throughout this process, the Land Trust has worked with not only MEMC, the Town and County, but numerous local organizations including the Coal Creek Watershed Coalition and High Country Conservation Advocates (HCCA), which have continued to advocate for a mine-free watershed.

The impacts from the historic Keystone Mine site on Mt. Emmons, although small in comparison to what could be developed in the future, will require perpetual water treatment, said Julie Nania, water program director at HCCA.

“This is our headwaters,” Nania said. “This is our drinking water source. Having a massive mine at the front of that would hugely impact our environment, primarily our water resources all throughout the Gunnison Valley.”

Conservation easements can only be put in place on private lands, so the drafted easement will not be effective until the land is actually exchanged. The Forest Service anticipates the land exchange to be completed in 2023. At the same time, other local leaders are working to protect the surrounding lands and waterways from future mining exploration.

Once complete, the land exchange – although just one of the many steps in a five-decade long push – will make a mark in Crested Butte’s history books.

“I think Mt. Emmons is a defining issue and feature of the community,” said Mayor Ian Billick. “The Red Lady sits right there looking over the town, and she’s hard to miss. It’s just a part of who we are.”

A COMMUNITY EFFORT TO SAVE MT. EMMONS

1880

Crested Butte is incorporated as a town

1880's-1950's

Various mining operations open and close around the Crested Butte area

1950's

Keystone Mine begins extracting hard metals on Mt. Emmons

1977

- AMAX establishes molybdenum mining plans on Mt Emmons
- High Country Conservation Advocates (HCCA) is established to fight the threat of mining on Mt. Emmons

1981

AMAX postpones mining and Crested Butte hosts a celebration on top of Mt. Emmons.

1981-2015

Crested Butte community works with HCCA to counter numerous attempts to mine Mt. Emmons

1991

Crested Butte Land Trust is established

2016

Freeport McMoRan becomes new owner of Mt. Emmons mining property

2022

Freeport McMoRan subsidiary, Mt. Emmons Mining Company, initiates land exchange and conservation easement with the US Forest Service and Crested Butte Land Trust

2023

Anticipated completion of land exchange and conservation easement on Mt. Emmons



COLLABORATIVE CONSERVATION AND LONG LAKE:

A COMMUNITY RESOURCE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

The Crested Butte Land Trust's mission to protect and care for open lands in the Gunnison Valley wouldn't be possible without partnerships with willing land owners, local ranchers, government entities, fellow nonprofits, and community members. One shining example of this collaborative conservation in action is Long Lake.

The Crested Butte Land Trust is the proud owner of 120 acres of the southern end of Long Lake, having acquired this unique piece of land through the Long Lake Land Exchange in 2020. The complex, multi-year land exchange between the Crested Butte Land Trust, the Trust for Public Land, and the United States Forest Service is in itself a success story of creative, collaborative conservation. As a result, the exchange has now improved access to Gunnison National Forest public lands, generated significant funding for affordable housing in the valley, and allowed the Crested Butte Land Trust to responsibly protect and steward Long Lake for future generations forever.

The Crested Butte Land Trust is dedicated to upholding Long Lake's legacy, and our collaborative conservation continues through thoughtful management, public education, and strong partnerships.

In previous years, the Crested Butte Land Trust successfully rerouted the northern approach trail up to Long Lake in partnership with the Allen family, Crested Butte Conservation Corps, and Vail Resorts. However, as the southern

portion of the lake has experienced an increase in wear and tear over the years, another new trail was in order. The goal for the new trail was not only to help mitigate damage to the southern shoreline and hillside, but also to spread out visitors and make the Long Lake experience more user-friendly and accessible.

The vision for the trail is reflective of the collaborative efforts of the Long Lake Planning Committee, a group representing landowners of the area and various entities, including the Crested Butte Land Trust; Allen family; Meridian Lake Park property owners; Gunnison County; the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District; Colorado Parks and Wildlife; and the Crested Butte Mountain Biking Association (CBMBA). Since the Long Lake Land Exchange acquisition, this group has worked together to ensure Long Lake's amenities and public resources are responsibly managed and enjoyed by future generations.

"The planning committee has done amazing work and collaborated to try to make this something really special," said Kurt Giesselman, a homeowner near Long Lake and member of the Long Lake Planning Committee. "Everyone pitched in together, and from the beginning, there have been incredibly thoughtful and fruitful conversations. Everyone has put in the time and effort to listen to different points of view."

The Crested Butte Land Trust partnered with CBMBA to design and build a new pedestrian trail that is handcycle accessible and starts at the top of the road accessed from the Meridian Lake Dam.

"We were very excited to be approached by the Crested Butte Land Trust for this project," said CBMBA Executive Director Dave Ochs. "The Land Trust is one of our biggest and best partners, and it is a

partnership we are so grateful to have. I couldn't imagine life without certain trails the Land Trust has afforded us. These trails are some of our most precious recreational amenities. I love working on those trails and doing the stewardship necessary to uphold those trails."

The Crested Butte Land Trust also collaborated with the Adaptive Sports Center (ASC) to ensure the trail is accessible for adaptive handcycles, including wide width, low-grade pitches, sustainable switchbacks, and a smooth trail surface.

"A lot of credit goes to the Land Trust for starting the conversation," said ASC Program Director Chris Read. "The Land Trust approached us to brainstorm how to increase the use and access for local populations, including people with special needs. Our user base is no different than the greater tourism base. Everyone wants to come here and experience this valley. Long Lake is a very unique location in that it offers multi-sport opportunities, from hiking, to handcycling, to stand-up paddleboarding, to a picnic by the lake with the family. It's beautiful up there, and it's an incredible asset to this end of the valley. It's a great resource that we can now offer to our adaptive guests."

Read continued, "This valley is full of so many organizations that have a common mindset of respect for the natural world. The amazing support Adaptive receives from these partner organizations, like the Land Trust, allows us to provide access and equity for people with disabilities. It is so important to reduce barriers to participation and serve these niche groups. But it goes way beyond access for folks with disabilities, it really opens the door to a wide scope of people, including aging populations and people who are new to the mountains. We feel very fortunate that

Adaptive can be a catalyst behind this broadened access."

Thanks to the hard work of CBMBA and the Conservation Corps, along with the dozens of community volunteers who helped along the way, the trail came to fruition this fall and is now ready for users to enjoy.

"It was amazing to watch the construction progress this summer with people from CBMBA and the Conservation Corps up there working almost every day," said Giesselman. "It was really hard work. But as I interacted with tourists and lake visitors this year, not only did I witness the enthusiasm for a new trail as it unfolded, but I also saw better behavior and trail etiquette. Trail work is such a grand effort, and people were very aware of how much work went into this project. Folks really stepped up their game about trail awareness."

With the majority of the trail building complete, Long Lake is now accessible for recreationists, locals and visitors, of all levels and abilities. This spring, the Land Trust will continue improvements by restoring numerous social trails and implementing new signage. "Being the forever steward of a place as special as Long Lake is an honor for the Land Trust. It is important to provide the right level of infrastructure to protect the resource while leaving it as wild and natural as possible. We think we've found that balance at Long Lake," said Jake Jones, Crested Butte Land Trust Executive Director.

The Crested Butte Land Trust is grateful for our committed partners, steadfast supporters, and all those involved in the Long Lake process. We truly couldn't do such impactful work without these collaborative conservation efforts, and we will continue to seek these partnerships as we carry out our mission to preserve the present for the future.



SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT: SUE NAVY

Before the Crested Butte Land Trust was established to preserve the scenic vistas, wildlife habitats, recreational opportunities, and ranching heritage of the Gunnison Valley, community members had long advocated for the protection of this slice of paradise at the end of the road.

One of the first examples of public land advocacy in Crested Butte includes a group of citizens who opposed mining on Mt. Emmons, affectionately known by locals as the Red Lady. Among those community members integral to High Country Conservation Advocates (HCCA) is HCCA Board President Sue Navy. Navy was involved in the formation of this organization that helped blaze a trail for public land advocacy and conservation.

Navy first came to Crested Butte in 1971 and, like many of us who call this place home, was attracted to the beauty and solace of the mountains.

“What brought me here was my need for survival,” she says. “I grew up in a big city and was drawn to the mountains from an early age. I was really lucky to discover Crested Butte when no one had heard of it. I came to visit, and within the next couple of weeks, I was prepared to move here. It just happened that fast, I found a small town with a community that I wanted to be a part of.”

Initially, Navy took up the Crested Butte lifestyle working various jobs around town and enjoying paradise. “I was just living a gifted existence in a beautiful place, and I hadn’t thought there was anything to be concerned about here...until AMAX came along,” she says, noting the mining corporation proposing to develop a massive molybdenum mine on Red Lady. “When the mine proposal reared its head, all of a sudden, the community banded together to say, ‘no, this is not what we want and we’re going to stop it if we can.’ The next thing I knew, I was working to stop this mine from happening.

We believed, against all odds, that we could stop it.”

As a result, Navy was involved in the formation of HCCA in 1977. But the organization and its members were passionate about more than just stopping the mine. To this day, HCCA’s mission is to protect the health and natural beauty of the land, rivers, and wildlife in and around Gunnison County now and for future generations.

“We wanted to protect this community and its environment from whatever threats would come our way,” says Navy. “We wanted to protect our public lands.”

HCCA and the Crested Butte Land Trust have worked in parallel for many years with little crossover until now. While HCCA is focused on public land conservation and restoration, the Crested Butte Land Trust works with willing landowners to protect private lands rich with conservation values. The federal land exchange with the Mt. Emmons Mining Company (MEMC) has brought the two organizations together with a common purpose.

“Our relationship with MEMC has brought us to a point where we can have a conservation easement via the land exchange, and now the Land Trust can play its role in ending this 45-year issue to stop mining on Red Lady,” says Navy.

Given all of her work to protect Red Lady, Navy is also a Red Lady herself. Each year, HCCA honors a community member for their support and devotion to HCCA’s mission to carry on the legacy of protecting the Gunnison Valley. As Red Lady #11, Navy has witnessed immense progress in land conservation over the years and hopes that impact will continue. “It is my world. It’s where I live and I share this environment with so many different forms of life. I want the best for our lands in the future. We need to protect what we have.”



CRESTED BUTTE LAND TRUST BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Whether you experience nature by foot or by pedal, in silence or amongst friends, we are all bound by our appreciation of wild places and working landscapes. Serving on the board of the Crested Butte Land Trust allows me to play a role as steward for the lands we enjoy today and protect new lands our grandchildren will treasure. I hope you will consider getting involved in your own way as we pursue our mission.

-John Simmons, Vice President

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2023 EVENTS

A Starry Evening with the Crested Butte Land Trust / July 8, 2023

Join us for an evening full of great food, music, and live auction.

Contact Ashley for more details at ashley@cblandtrust.org or 970-349-1206

Caddis Cup Fly Fishing Tournament / July 14-15, 2023

Whether you're an avid angler or just enjoy a day on the river, join us for an exciting weekend of parties, fundraising, and fly fishing!

Contact Ashley for more details at ashley@cblandtrust.org or 970-349-1206

Land Trust Winter Field Trips / Fridays 1/27, 2/24, and 3/24, 2023

Join CLBT and partner organizations to learn about the great work being done on your local conserved lands.

Contact Jess for more details at jessica@cblandtrust.org or 970-349-1206

Visit www.cblandtrust.org/cbltevents for more details



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Thank you to all the photographers who submitted photos for CBLT to use.
Look for our calendar coming soon to your favorite local store.

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