



THIS IS **YOUR PLACE**

2024 WINTER NEWSLETTER

Message from the Executive Director
30 Years of Stewardship
Recreation and Conservation Ranger
Mt. Emmons Land Exchange

Stewardship Stories: Lilli Loop and Gunsight Bridge
Supporter Spotlight

CRESTED BUTTE
LAND TRUST
**BOARD OF
DIRECTORS**

Every time I am out for a ride, walking the dog, or simply driving up the valley, I am so thankful for my surroundings, the views, and open space that we have. This is in no small part due to the work of the Land Trust. I encourage anyone who spends time here to check out one of our field trips, meet us for coffee, or attend a fundraiser to see what our amazing team does to conserve and steward this land."

**-Jill Indovino
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A MESSAGE

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



photo: Jerry Clark

The core of the Crested Butte Land Trust's work revolves around protecting land rich with "conservation values," which include wildlife habitats, scenic viewsheds, working landscapes, and recreational opportunities. Sometimes a conservation project is aimed at all of these benefits; sometimes it may be focused on just one or two. Everytime the Land Trust embarks on a conservation project, we begin with a discussion. We talk to the landowner and their family about goals for protecting their land now and, more importantly, in the future. Conserving property is truly about one's legacy. Big stuff.

A conservation project may take years to complete, but, once finished, the land is conserved forever. And forever is a long time. Ensuring the land remains conserved in perpetuity is the lesser known aspect of the Land Trust's work. The long-term care of every family's conserved property and every Land Trust-owned parcel is called "stewardship."

This newsletter is dedicated to stewardship, conservation's sibling and co-conspirator. Conservation gets a lot of attention - each project is a victory, and the community is

often invited to celebrate the success. Mission accomplished? Not quite. Stewardship happens in real time, every growing season, every off-season, and every year. Forever.

As an organization that works with private landowners on conservation easements, and as a major landowner ourselves, we have an expanded obligation to care for the land we own and manage. This is where the story gets interesting. Not only does the Land Trust own critical portions of the most heavily used and loved areas around Crested Butte, like the Lower Loop, Long Lake, the Lupine Trails, Gunsight Bridge, the Mt. CB Rec Path, and large portions of the Slate River and its wetlands, we also own agricultural lands that produce the meat and vegetables that we put on our plates. Land Trust properties support a large portion of our world-class cross country skiing trail systems, destination mountain biking and hiking trails, habitat for big game and their migration routes, irrigated pastures, gardens, wetlands, and river corridors. Weaving throughout these lands are cattle grazing leases, people, fences, noxious weeds, neighbors, bridges, trails, signs, bathrooms, visitors, cars, beaches, trailheads, and more people... you get the picture. Successful land conservation has enabled this delicate matrix

of opportunities. Stewardship of these places is the glue that holds it all together.

Wait a minute, are all those amenities that we use every day owned by a small, community funded non-profit organization? Yes! The Land Trust maintains thousands of acres of agricultural land, wildlife habitats, and publicly accessible trails without consistent tax-generated revenue to care for those resources. That's right, it is your investment that keeps the trails in good shape, the bathrooms clean, and the noxious weeds at bay. Your annual donations support the mission of land conservation and stewardship in the Gunnison Valley.

People often ask me how they can get more involved in the Land Trust's mission. First of all, go take a hike. Literally. Please enjoy the trails you've helped provide. Secondly, your financial support is essential, and we are grateful for the generosity of so many in our community. We would also love to see you at our free and educational field trips, annual summer events, and rolling up your sleeves to pull weeds or remove old barbed wire fences. Tell your friends, consider a legacy gift in your will, give a monthly or annual gift, donate a conservation easement... the sky's the limit, forever is a long time, and the Crested Butte Land Trust is built to last.

Jake Jones, Executive Director



photo: Jerry Clark

30 YEARS OF STEWARDSHIP: OUR MISSION IN ACTION

Since 1991, the Crested Butte Land Trust has worked with partners to preserve scenic vistas, wildlife habitats, ranching heritage, and recreational opportunities forever. The Land Trust doesn't just work to conserve land for today – once conserved, lands must be monitored and maintained for generations to come.

Land stewardship is our mission in action. An investment in the future. Conserving and caring for lands is a constant, ever-changing task, and when we pursue conservation projects, we carefully consider our ability to steward them forever. This includes a wide variety of responsibilities; here are some of the ways we put our mission into action.

Annual Monitoring

Working with conservation landowners is a critical part of our stewardship efforts. As part of this collaboration, the Land Trust performs annual monitoring visits of every private conservation easement and Land Trust-owned parcel, culminating in nearly 6,000 acres of land

monitored every year. We ensure the terms of easements are being met, identify opportunities for improvement of conservation values on each parcel, and provide support for landowners who want to act on those opportunities.

"After easements are signed and the transaction is complete, that's really when our work begins," says Stewardship Director Jon Mugglestone. "We help landowners address issues on the ground, such as noxious weed management, fencing, and restoration projects. Developing our relationship with these willing landowners is key to our continued stewardship."

Noxious Weed Mitigation

The Land Trust works with community partners to mitigate weeds, including the Towns of Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte, Gunnison County, the US Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. We monitor and manage these weeds on our own conserved properties, help private landowners on their parcels, and host volunteer weed-pulling events.

"Noxious weeds don't pay attention to property line boundaries," says Mugglestone. "We have amazing partners working on this issue who recognize it's a community-wide, ongoing, collaborative effort. A lot of work has gone into weed management in the Gunnison Valley to protect native plant and animal habitats."

Low-Impact Recreational Use

The Land Trust partners with multiple agencies to provide trail connectivity and access points for low-impact recreational opportunities in the Gunnison Valley.

Many of the area's recreational trails are on private conserved lands owned or held in easement by the Land Trust, including the Lower Loop, Long Lake, Gunsight Bridge, and the Lupine Trails. We work with the Town of Crested Butte and Crested Butte Nordic to allow winter ski and snowshoe access along the Slate River Valley. Newer projects like the Coal Train Trail near Gunsight Bridge and the Lilli Loop at Long Lake weren't possible without significant collaboration between private landowners and ranchers, adjacent land agencies, and partners like the Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association and the Crested Butte Conservation Corps.

The Land Trust is responsible for managing these areas for low-impact recreational use. We utilize our stewardship team, community partners, and hard-working volunteers to help build and maintain trails, create signage, and clean up trash and other human impacts. We educate the public on responsible recreation, trail etiquette, and leave-no-trace principles.

"These trails have come together through years of collaboration and partnerships," says CB Nordic Executive Director Hedda Peterson, who previously served as the Land Trust's stewardship director. "We are fortunate to have such forward-thinking minds at the table to secure easements for the community to have these recreational outlets. We were ahead of the curve 30 years ago, and we will continue to be ahead of the curve through our continued stewardship practices."

Restoring Wetlands, Streams, and Wildlife Habitats

Another Land Trust stewardship focus is protecting wetlands, streams, and wildlife habitats on conserved properties. To address the challenge of protecting these critical ecosystems, we formed the collaborative Slate River Working Group (SRWG) in partnership with the Town of Crested Butte. The SRWG is made up of volunteer community members; landowners in the Slate River Valley; ranch operators; recreationalists; and regional representatives from the state, county, and local levels. This group identifies and implements river-specific management opportunities in the Upper Slate River Valley.



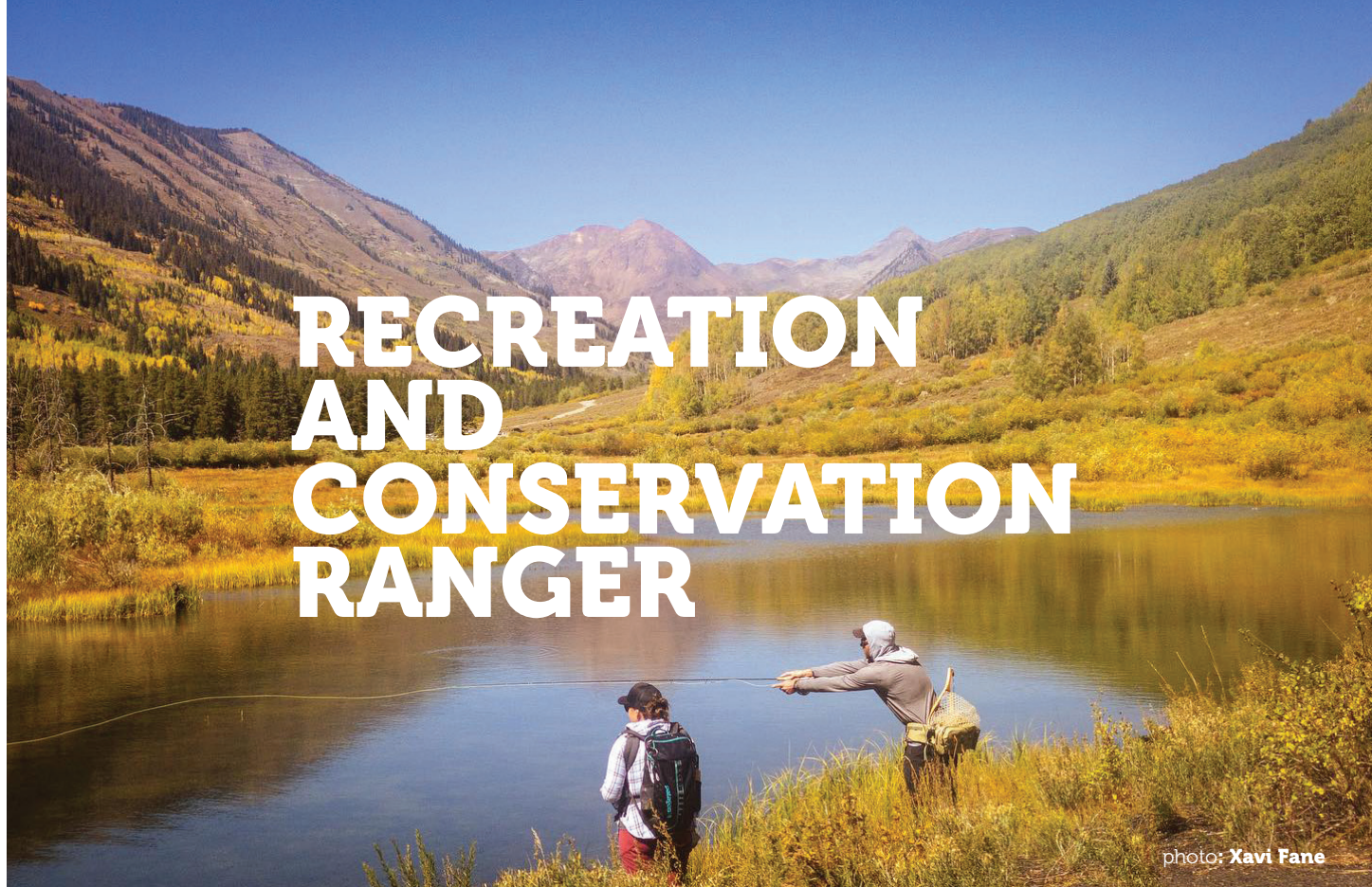
photo: Xavi Fane

"Our priority is to make sure we have everybody at the table. There's a real desire to include that community of people who want to responsibly manage and protect our wetlands, rivers, and wildlife habitats," says Mugglestone. "These partnerships help us make stewardship decisions and provide outreach and education that result in a sustainable Slate River corridor."

One example of a collaborative effort stemming from the SRWG is the Recreation and Conservation Ranger who provides a human presence at highly used river put-ins and trailheads every summer. After being recommended by the SRWG, this annual position has been managed by the Land Trust for the past five years.

Stewardship in Perpetuity

The Land Trust is proud of our stewardship practices, and we are honored to be a community resource that protects working lands, recreation corridors, and waterways in the Gunnison Valley. Willing landowners, local ranchers, government entities, fellow nonprofits, and committed community members make this valuable work possible. Our stewardship is never complete – it's an ongoing promise and investment in the Valley. The better we care for our lands today, the more the next generation will experience the Gunnison Valley we know and love. With support from you, our generous community, we will continue preserving the present for the future.



RECREATION AND CONSERVATION RANGER

photo: Xavi Fane

As recreational use in Crested Butte continues to increase substantially, so does the need for more awareness around habitat conservation, trail and river etiquette, and private property boundaries. Over the past several years, we’ve learned that human presence is one of the most impactful methods to educate the community and visitors on responsible recreation. To that end, the Crested Butte Land Trust has hired an annual Recreation and Conservation Ranger for the past five years.

This summer, Mars Charlebois worked diligently to educate recreators about safe and responsible practices at some of Crested Butte’s most popular trailheads and river access points. She informed users how to recreate on, care for, and enjoy conserved lands at various high-traffic locations around Crested Butte, including Gunsight Bridge, the Slate River Boat Launch, Long Lake, and the Lower Loop.

Mars encouraged good river and trail etiquette by teaching best practices for safe and responsible recreation. She explained the importance of respecting private property, being mindful of wildlife habitats, and leaving no trace. Mars also advised river users of the voluntary no-float period from March 15 to July 15 between the Gunsight Bridge and Slate River Boat Launch to respect the critical nesting period

in the Great Blue Heron rookery.

“My role was to make sure people coming through the area were aware of their impacts and inform them of the regulations, etiquette, and ethics of recreating in the area,” says Mars. “Sometimes all it takes is a friendly conversation. Most of the time, people were willing to make adjustments to minimize their impacts.”

“We see a real acute need to interact with recreators,” says Stewardship Director Jon Mugglestone. “Places like the Gunsight Bridge area see so much heavy use, and it’s really important to be on site to do outreach and education. Having a physical presence with someone to talk to and share information makes such a positive impact. It brings much more awareness to the trails and river put-ins where it’s needed most.”

Additionally, Mars monitored overall use on Town- and Land Trust-owned properties and collected recreation user data for best management practices. This data will help the Land Trust and our community partners identify issues and make informed decisions to better steward the lands moving forward. “A big focus of Mars’ work this season was to collect recreation user data – how many people are using these places, how are they using them, when are they using them, etc.,” says Mugglestone. “We’re collecting user data so we



photo: Xavi Fane

have a deeper understanding of the use in these high-traffic areas. This critical information plays a significant role in helping us make land management and stewardship decisions in the future.”

Mars has a background in fisheries biology and is currently working on her master’s degree in environmental management at Western Colorado University. Her experience as the Recreation and Conservation Ranger has allowed her to take what she’s learned in the field and apply it to her master’s work. “Crested Butte feels so pristine, there is so much conserved land here,” she says. “Then you realize all the effort that has gone into protecting these lands and how all these organizations are working together to protect this place, it’s pretty amazing.”

The Land Trust is grateful for Mars and her presence in the valley this year. We are proud of the partnerships and annual monitoring efforts that have gone into ensuring the protection of your conserved lands. Keep an eye out for the Recreation and Conservation Ranger at local rivers and trailheads next summer, and stop by to say hi!



photo: Petar Dopchev

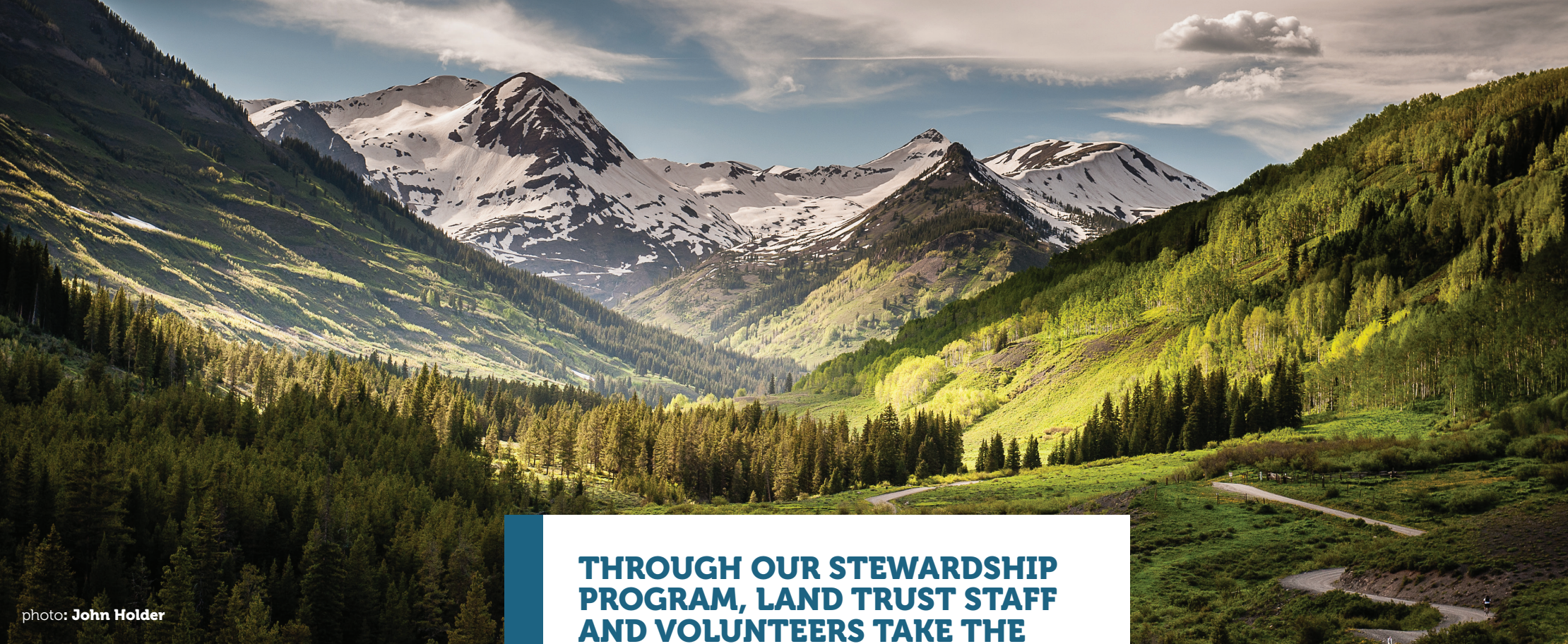


photo: **John Holder**

**THROUGH OUR STEWARDSHIP
PROGRAM, LAND TRUST STAFF
AND VOLUNTEERS TAKE THE
BEST POSSIBLE CARE OF THE
LANDS WE ALL KNOW AND LOVE**



photo: **Conni Mahoney**

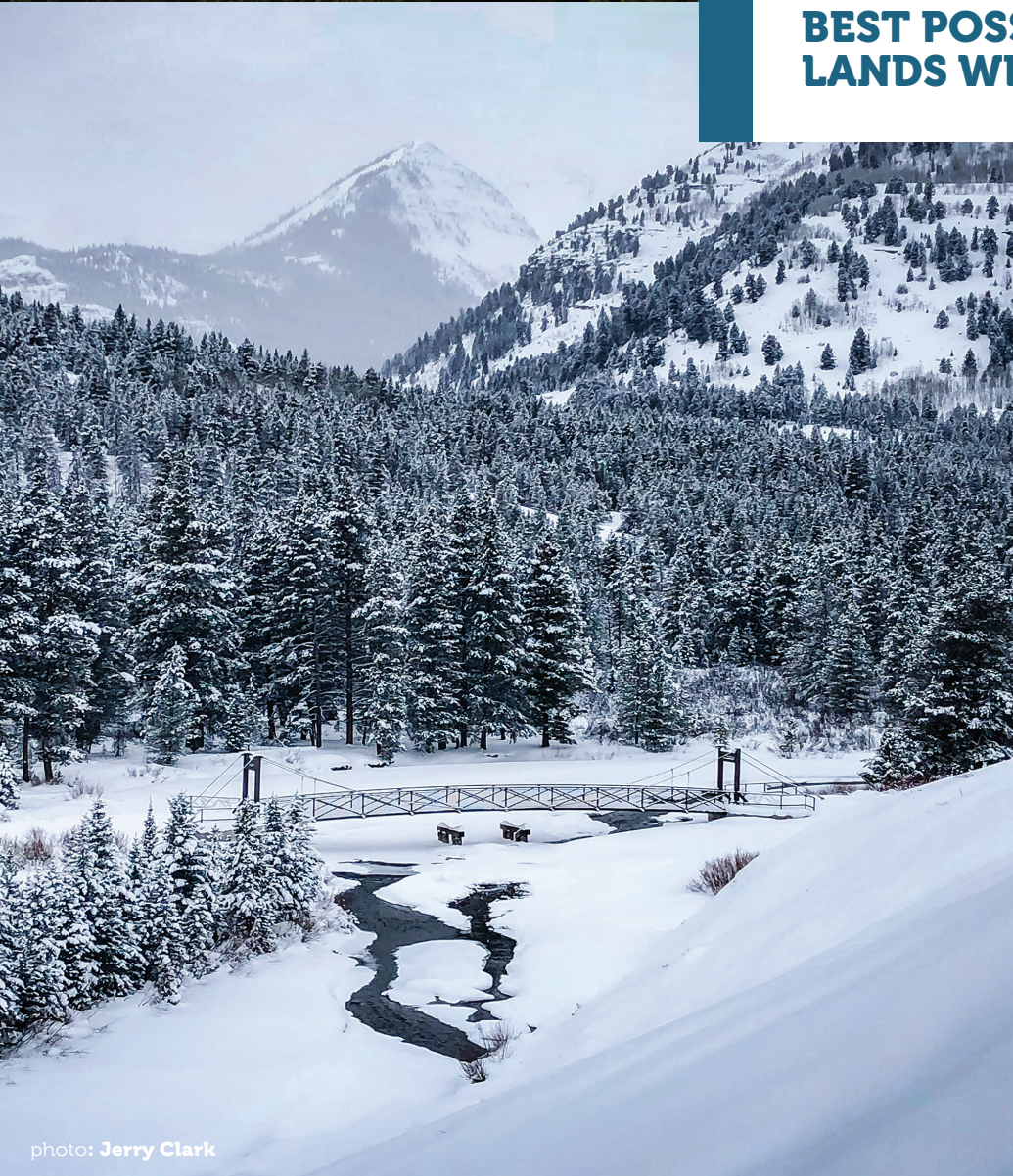


photo: **Jerry Clark**



photo: **Marilyn Rodman**



photo: **John Holder**



photo: **Xavi Fane**



photo: Xavi Fane

MT. EMMONS LAND EXCHANGE:

MAKING PROGRESS TO PROTECT RED LADY ONCE AND FOR ALL

For almost five decades, our community has strived to remove the threat of mining in the Town's watershed on Red Lady. Today, Crested Butte's longest-running conservation effort is making leaps and bounds toward the finish line.

Many of us are familiar with the history – in 1977, the multi-national mining corporation Amax had plans to extract the valuable mineral molybdenum from Mt. Emmons, affectionately nicknamed “Red Lady” by the community. The Town of Crested Butte and concerned citizens, who would become the High Country Conservation Advocates (HCCA), came together to fight the mining threat on and around Red Lady. Amax abandoned its plans in 1981, leaving a mine water treatment plant to protect the Gunnison River headwaters. The community continued to rally together over the years to counter other mining companies

and their threats to Red Lady. In 2015, the tides turned when Freeport-McMoRan and its subsidiary, the Mt. Emmons Mining Company (MEMC), assumed responsibility for the mine, including the water treatment plant, and began working with the Crested Butte community to find a permanent solution.

The Crested Butte Land Trust, in partnership with the US Forest Service, Town of Crested Butte, Gunnison County, HCCA, and the Coal Creek Watershed Coalition, has now negotiated the terms of a conservation easement and mineral extinguishment agreement with MEMC to forever prohibit mining on Mt. Emmons. This proposal marks a critical step toward fulfilling the decades-long community efforts to permanently protect Red Lady, the upper Gunnison River watershed, and our community's conservation legacy.

In the proposed Mt. Emmons Land Exchange, MEMC will transfer private property in Gunnison County's Ohio Creek headwaters and in Saguache County to the US Forest Service. In exchange, MEMC will acquire land surrounding the water treatment plant and related road infrastructure at the historic Keystone Mine site.

As part of the proposed exchange, the Land Trust and MEMC have agreed to a conservation easement that will forever prohibit mining on Mt. Emmons while preserving existing recreational opportunities. Additionally, the conservation easement establishes permanent non-motorized public recreation access to Red Lady Bowl and prohibits future commercial and residential development on MEMC-owned lands, aside from activities required to remediate the impacts of past mining and to clean the water that flows into Coal Creek. The conservation easement will only go into effect once the land exchange is complete.

“The purpose of this conservation easement is to protect the conservation values of Mt. Emmons and

the surrounding area, including wildlife habitats, scenic views, environmental quality, and recreation,” says Executive Director Jake Jones. “The result will be greater protection for the watershed now and in perpetuity. We worked hard with MEMC and our partners at the Town of Crested Butte, Gunnison County, HCCA, and the Coal Creek Watershed Coalition to get the best protections possible for Mt. Emmons.”

The Mt. Emmons Land Exchange, conservation easement, and mineral extinguishment agreement are expected to be completed in the first half of 2024. In partnership with the Town of Crested Butte and Gunnison County, which will have some third-party enforcement rights, the Land Trust's role in the care of Red Lady will continue through monitoring the property to ensure the terms of the easement are met in perpetuity. We are grateful to the advocates, stakeholders, partners, and supporters who have worked with steadfast commitment and passion over the years to get the community to the brink of victory after nearly five decades.



photo: Trevor Bona

LILLI LOOP TRAIL: CONTINUED STEWARDSHIP EFFORTS AT LONG LAKE

Since completing the Long Lake Land Exchange and acquiring 120 acres of the southern end of Long Lake, the Crested Butte Land Trust has worked diligently to uphold, protect, and steward the lake's legacy for future generations. This has included collaborating with regional partners to create the Long Lake Planning Committee, which ensures responsible management of the lake's amenities and public resources.

This past summer, one such effort was completed - a new loop trail along the southern end of Long Lake called the "Lilli Loop." This trail was supported by a naming gift from Jeff Hermanson in honor of his daughter, Lilli, during the Land Trust's acquisition of Long Lake.

"Long Lake has been an important part of the Crested Butte experience for the 50 years that I've been here. It's a great community amenity, and protecting it was a worthwhile endeavor for the Land Trust. Theresa, Lilli, and I were thrilled to support this effort," says Hermanson.

The idea for the Lilli Loop came out of an effort to improve access to the lake for more people and to

address erosion caused by social trails on the steep hillside above the lake. Intended for hikers and hand cyclists, much of it was built with help from the Crested Butte Conservation Corps staff and volunteers with input from the Adaptive Sports Center. This one-mile loop provides a destination hike where none existed in the past, and it is built wide enough to ensure accessibility for recreationalists of all abilities. After installing new signage and improving the single track connecting the upper and lower sections this year, the full loop system is now complete.

"These improvements ensure the trail is wide enough and provides safe access for all users," says Stewardship Director Jon Mugglestone. "Our objective is to invite outdoor access for all to enjoy that site and to provide sustainable opportunities to do so."

The Land Trust will continue to restore social trails that cause erosion and resource damage and implement long-term management solutions for Long Lake. Thanks to our Long Lake Planning Committee, regional partners, and generous donors, this beloved, high-use community resource will now be maintained for generations to come.



photo: Xavi Fane

GUNSIGHT BRIDGE: BRIDGING STEWARDSHIP, COMMUNITY, AND CONSERVATION

This fall, the Crested Butte Land Trust celebrated the fifth anniversary of the new Gunsight Bridge. The bridge is a popular location for year-round activity in the Slate River Valley – it's where hikers and bikers connect to nearby trails, where families and pets cool off in the summer, and where cross country skiers adventure in the winter. Gunsight Bridge is a hub for favorite local trails, sensitive wildlife habitats, ranching, and access to federally designated wilderness. The Gunsight Bridge area also provides an opportunity for land managers to come together to address increasing concerns around habitat impacts, mine reclamation, recreation, and private property.

From the 1800s to the 1920s, the original Gunsight Bridge, located at the end of the Denver Rio Grande Railroad, accessed the coal crusher for the Anthracite Mine on Smith Hill, which produced over 1 million tons of coal. The railroad crossed the Slate River on the bridge and changed directions on a turntable just upriver.

The mine closed in 1929, and, in 2003, the Land Trust purchased the 120-acre Gunsight Bridge property from Pitkin Iron Corporation. At the time, only the skeleton

of a bridge was in place, and the Land Trust repaired it for use by hikers and bikers. In 2011, the Land Trust partnered with the Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining, and Safety to restore neighboring wetlands. Studies of the area found that the old bridge was contributing to in-stream erosion and affecting the natural channels of the surrounding wetlands. In 2018, the Land Trust replaced the bridge to help restore the natural hydrology of the river. As it stands today, Gunsight Bridge interacts positively with the river, its floodplain, and its surrounding habitats.

But, it's more than just a physical bridge! Gunsight Bridge also represents the many critical connections that make land conservation possible in the Gunnison Valley. This well-loved heart of the Slate River Valley requires continuous care, and the Land Trust is committed to the ongoing work with help from our partners. We monitor the area throughout the year to ensure bank stabilization, bridge maintenance, and the mitigation of human impacts. Collaborative stewardship "bridges" our community together to create a more sustainable and resilient future for our conserved lands, and none of this is possible without you - our funders, volunteers, and supporters.



SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT: **JANE AND JERRY CLARK**

Stewardship of the Gunnison Valley's lands and waterways is at the heart of what the Crested Butte Land Trust does. After a property is conserved, it has to be cared for forever, and that work takes many forms and many hands. From volunteers rolling up their sleeves and digging in the dirt, to thoughtful leaders taking the time to plan for the future, to generous donors helping fulfill this mission – we are grateful for our bountiful community of stewards.

Among these stewards are Jane and Jerry Clark. Jerry's career and travels brought him and Jane to Colorado multiple times, planting the seed to eventually become Crested Butte residents in 2013. Shortly after moving here, the Clarks learned about the Land Trust and connected with the mission to protect our open vistas, wildlife habitats, recreational opportunities, and ranching heritage.

"It hit me how involved and connected the Crested Butte Land Trust was in this community," says Jerry. "What a fantastic experience to see the organization's impact and view the land from that perspective. Getting to know Land Trust supporters and stakeholders has connected us more to the community than anything else I can think of."

Jerry joined the Land Trust's Board of Directors in 2016 and, for seven years, has assisted the organization's financial planning. As the treasurer, Jerry has dedicated his Board service to ensuring the Land Trust's finances are effective and responsible.

"Good Board governance is an act of stewardship, and the Land Trust strives to have a well-rounded Board of Directors with various expertise, knowledge, and backgrounds," says Executive Director Jake Jones. "Jerry and his work on the Board embodies a level of long-term thinking, strategic investing, and financial responsibility so critical to the Land Trust. It's been amazing to have a treasurer with that degree of knowledge and involvement. I've learned a lot from Jerry."

During his time as treasurer, Jerry helped grow the Land Trust's Stewardship Fund, which, once fully funded, will provide a dependable source of revenue for the myriad stewardship tasks required to care for nearly 6,000 acres of conserved land. Anything from conservation easement monitoring, repairing wildlife-friendly fences, treating noxious weeds, maintaining signs, and providing port-a-potties at popular parking areas for trails on land managed by the Land Trust, like Gunsight Bridge and Long Lake.

"There are many challenges and responsibilities to forever stewarding the lands," says Jerry. "Every time we acquire land or secure a conservation easement, we are promising to preserve that land in perpetuity. This is both a physical and a financial responsibility. The Stewardship Fund is uniquely positioned to help us meet that financial obligation and commitment to forever protect these lands and keep our vision alive."

The Land Trust is also grateful for Jane's steadfast support over the years. "Jerry has done all the hard work," Jane laughs. "I've enjoyed being a supporter of the Land Trust, going to fundraisers, and hosting events at our house. The team of people involved is incredible, and I am so

amazed by their stewardship in conjunction with other key organizations here. They make these lands better. The Land Trust positively impacts everybody in the community. We love their mission and love supporting their mission."

Jane and Jerry hike, snowshoe, and enjoy the wildlife and scenic views right out of their backyard in Alpine Meadows. "We're directly impacted by the Land Trust's stewardship where we live – outside our door, we have the Lower Loop, Lupine Trails, GB Connector, the Coal Train Trail," says Jane.

Jerry is also an avid nature photographer, and many of his photos have highlighted Land Trust-conserved lands. He draws inspiration from landscape photographers and environmentalists Ansel Adams and John Fielder.

"A picture says a thousand words, and that's very much the case with Jerry's art and his ability to portray and capture our protected landscapes," says Jones. "We are grateful for his photo portfolio and contributions, which, in addition to his Board service, are part of his legacy."

Land Trust Board members are term-limited, and Jerry recently completed two full terms. Although his time on the Board has come to a close, the Land Trust is grateful for his dedication and financial care over the years. Jane and Jerry look forward to continuing their support and staying involved with the Land Trust.

"We're not going anywhere," says Jane. "Our community is blessed with people with big and generous hearts. That's what really drew us here. The Land Trust holds us together with the common goal to keep this valley the way we all love it for generations to come."





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GET INVOLVED!

DONATE OR VOLUNTEER

Invest in your community! There are lots of ways you can support your local land trust.

LEAVE A LEGACY

Please consider the Crested Butte Land Trust in your will or retirement plan.

EVENTS

We hope to see you soon at one of our field trips, the Starry Evening Gala, the Caddis Cup Fly Fishing Tournament, and more!

Visit cblandtrust.org or contact Development Director Ashley UpChurch at ashley@cblandtrust.org or 970-349-1206 to learn more.



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Thank you to all the photographers who submitted photos for CBLT to use. Designed by Tyler Hansen. Unless otherwise noted, all articles are written by Kendra Walker.

photo: Marilyn Rodman