

CASE STUDY:

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS AND THE CONSERVATION EASEMENT TAX CREDIT

Beverly and her husband, Clark, have owned their property near Grand Lake for more than 25 years. During that time, the couple have extensively explored their 37 acres that abuts Rocky Mountain National Park. The property is densely populated with diverse trees, plants and wildlife, including deer, elk and bears.

They've also seen firsthand how changes in the environment have impacted plants and wildlife. As temperatures have risen, beetle larvae no longer freeze and die out during the winter, which allows the beetles to hatch and cause tremendous damage. The beetle-killed trees become fodder for wildfires, which continue the process of warming and changing the ecosystem forever. Beverly recognized the value of leaving the land alone to follow a natural cycle. However, as the environment changes and temperatures warm, she notes that landowners should be intentional about how to respond. She acknowledges that being a landowner at this critical time - the era of fires like the East Troublesome fire that ravaged her region in 2022 - comes with serious responsibilities.

Voluntary Conservation

The Parsons feel called upon to protect the land they live on. Their first step in doing so was to formally conserve their land in partnership with their local land trust, and chose a conservation easement to help them reach their goals. Securing the conservation easement was uncommon in the area when the Parsons pursued one, because many landowners presumed easements were only for large ranches or properties with thousands of acres. The land trust worked with them to create an agreement that would protect a smaller piece of land.

Landowner Incentive: The State Tax Credit

Beverly says the tax credit was the incentive that made it financially reasonable to put the easement on the property. She notes, "It seems that such conservation benefits the whole of society, and seems like a reasonable exchange for some money from the government."

Landowner:

Beverly and Clark Parsons

- **County:** Grand
- **Acres conserved under easement:** 37
- **Benefits:** Fire prevention, mitigation, wildlife habitat
- **Year conserved:** 2007
- **Tax credits leveraged:** Yes
- **Partner land trust:** Colorado Headwaters Land Trust

"When we did this, we were giving up the option of subdividing and making several building sites. We pursued that for quite a while and in the end really wanted to protect the land from development." - Beverly Parsons

[Read "Reflecting Nature's Cycle in Stewarding Healthy Forests" for more.](#)

