



KEEP IT
COLORADO

THE COALITION AT A GLANCE

ANNUAL REPORT

2022

Elevate | Empower | Evolve

Photo: Heartland Ranch Nature Preserve | Southern Plains Land Trust

VISION

WE ENVISION A COLORADO WHERE PEOPLE, LANDS, WATERS AND WILDLIFE THRIVE.

MISSION

OUR MISSION IS TO UNITE, ELEVATE AND EMPOWER COLORADO'S CONSERVATION COMMUNITY TO PROTECT THE LANDS AND WATERS THAT DEFINE OUR STATE.

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear friends and partners in conservation,

The year 2022 was another busy, productive and fruitful year for the coalition. Our strategic priorities in 2022 were to Elevate, Empower and Evolve – and I'm pleased to report that we made advancements in all of these areas. We advocated for strong conservation policy; created opportunities for members to convene and problem-solve; delivered funding and programmatic solutions to advance more on-the-ground conservation; and conducted educational outreach to share the good work of land trusts and other conservation organizations with more people.

Particular milestones to note in 2022 were the development of *Conserving Colorado: A 10-year Roadmap for the Future of Private Land Conservation*; the passage of a new law to protect landowners who've conserved property; the continuation of our Transaction Cost Assistance program to support landowners and land trusts; and development of a program to explore new and creative ways to value conservation. We also secured funding to launch the Emerging Conservation Opportunities program, which helps us advance diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives through partnered programming, among other opportunities. We held our first inaugural Fall Reception, developed educational resources for landowners considering voluntarily conserving their property, and launched awareness campaigns.

Key to our progress this year was the addition of two people to our staff, who greatly built on our ability to deliver high-quality programs and services to members and helped us pursue priorities our members have said are important. Hannah George joined us as programs and events coordinator, managing our regrant programs and coordinating all things event related. We also engaged Katelyn Toigo as our conservation innovation fellow to manage the development of an alternative valuation pilot program.

I hope that as you read this edition of our annual *Coalition at a Glance*, you'll feel inspired about the conservation community's collective progress. I call on you to join us in pursuing our vision of a Colorado where people, lands, waters and wildlife thrive.

Thank you for reading and for doing what you do to "keep it Colorado."

Melissa Daruna
Executive Director



2022 Strategy: Elevate, Empower and Evolve

Sandhill cranes | Michael Meneffe

Keep It Colorado's strategic priorities in 2022 were to **elevate** *conservation and the coalition* through storytelling and raising awareness; **empower** *our members and our organization* to be successful through securing new funding sources, completing a statewide conservation plan, and mapping a strategy to reauthorize the tax credit; and **evolve** *conservation and the coalition* by exploring new tools and methods for protecting land, infusing a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion into all that we do, and exploring new ways to grow our membership, among other emerging issues and opportunities that affect the conservation sector.

Key performance indicators (KPIs)

By Dec. 2022 we had completed or made significant progress toward completing our goals within 5 KPI target categories:

- Increase Public Awareness
- Establish Coalition Financial Sustainability
- Establish the Conservation Catalyst Fund
- Finalize the Statewide Private Land Conservation Plan
- Establish an Alternative Valuation Method

“I’m so impressed with Keep It Colorado's evolution and ambition. It truly embodies ‘servant leadership’.”

- Suzanne Stephens, Executive Director,
Aspen Valley Land Trust

KEY OUTCOMES AND PROGRESS IN FIVE CORE FOCUS AREAS IN 2022

POLICY ADVOCACY

We advocate for sound public policy that supports and advances more on-the-ground conservation based on members' collective input and priorities.

In 2022, Keep It Colorado continued to support and defend the state conservation easement tax credit program, began to map a pathway for reauthorization of the tax credit, collaborated with partners to support sound climate action policy, explored landowner protection and incentives for providing recreation access, and supported additional local and federal legislative issues.



Staff had an information booth for legislators at GOCO's Day at the Capitol.

Advancements in Policy

- Advocated for a new law that would protect landowners and conserved lands by ensuring just and fair compensation for the property and conservation values lost when the property with a conservation easement is condemned. In a win for conservation, Governor Polis signed Condemned Conservation Easement Property Compensation (HB22-208) into law.
- Supported Land Trust Alliance in advocating for the Charitable Conservation Easement Integrity Act, which was passed and signed into law.
- Reached out and engaged with Colorado legislators about the 2023 Farm Bill, and provided recommendations for opportunities to improve the programs.
- Supported partners in the successful passage of Safe Crossings for Colorado Wildlife and Motorists (SB22-151), Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Resources (SB22-206), Habitat Partnership Program (HB22-1072), and Updates to State Forestry Service Tree Nursery (HB22-1323).



Front Range regional meeting with members at Root Shoot Malting, Olander Farms, in Loveland

HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY SOLUTIONS

We pursue and develop funding and programmatic solutions that strengthen the coalition's ability and the greater conservation sector's ability to continue this work now and into the future.

In 2022 we built on or created several initiatives:

Transaction Cost Assistance Program (TCAP).

Building on the success of TCAP in 2021, in 2022 we regrant additional funds to land trusts to help cover the costs associated with conservation easement transactions. For landowners who wish to protect critical landscapes that are at imminent risk of being subdivided or converted to other uses, but who face financial barriers to facilitating the transaction, TCAP eases the financial burden. With this aid, landowners can move forward to protect critical habitat, local food systems, iconic viewsheds, wetland and river corridors, and places of historic and cultural significance.

Progress Highlights: Transaction Cost Assistance

- Received \$412,000 in Great Outdoors Colorado investments to disburse to members, who will use the funds to help cover costs for projects expected to close by late 2024.
- Awarded \$197,000 of those funds to three Colorado land trusts whose conservation activities will protect 8,512 acres of land and leverage nearly \$5.5 million in tax credits.
- With financial assistance from Keep It Colorado, eight land trusts helped landowners conserve 5,475 acres of land spanning 10 counties. That is equivalent to 4,147 American football fields or almost 11 Grand Lakes. Protection efforts also included acreage along 15 miles of stream.

Flying Triangle Ranch, a conservation project being aided by TCAP funding | Colorado West Land Trust



Conservation Plan. We dove head-on into planning efforts for *Conserving Colorado: A 10-year Roadmap for the Future of Private Land Conservation*. Development of the plan relied on the input of community members through a collaborative, interactive effort throughout 2022 – with goals to ensure more strategic, connected and impactful conservation initiatives statewide.

Progress highlights: Strategic Conservation Planning

- Hosted listening sessions and a planning forum, and conducted 1:1 interviews.
- Organized training workshops on The Nature Conservancy's Resilient & Connected Network and the Colorado Natural Heritage Program's Conservation Data Explorer.
- Developed strategic pillars, goals, metrics and an implementation framework.
- Embarked on a process to develop and draft the plan.
- Laid the groundwork for the plan's completion and publication in 2023.

HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY SOLUTIONS (cont'd)

Alternative Valuation Pilot. In 2022 Keep It Colorado launched the development an alternative valuation method that will enable conservation in critical areas of the state that feature the most biodiverse and climate-resilient landscapes. It will give landowners a choice about how to determine a proposed conservation easement value for their property - while maximizing opportunities to conserve wildlife habitat, water resources, healthy soils and other land conservation values.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ). Keep It Colorado is committed to creating a conservation sector that is more diverse, equitable and inclusive. In 2022 we took action at the board and staff level to integrate DEIJ principles into our culture and operations, and enable us to serve as a model for the coalition's statewide member organizations.

Progress Highlights: Alternative Valuation

- Launched the pilot and engaged a conservation fellow to manage it.
- Convened land trusts, landowners and other conservation professionals to determine how best to measure conservation values.
- Laid the groundwork for a continued development strategy through the end of 2023.

Progress highlights: DEIJ

- Organized in-depth dialogue and exploration of Keep It Colorado's approach to DEIJ, values, progress and vision.
- Completed an organizational Intercultural Development Inventory and individual Intercultural Development Plans.
- Developed a DEIJ action plan and identified priority activities for 2023.
- With Land Trust Alliance, began to lay the groundwork for DEIJ training opportunities for the coalition in 2023.



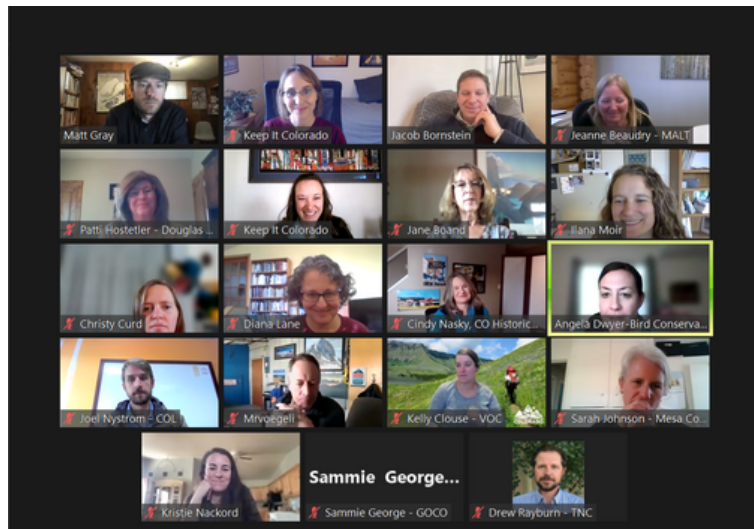
An Agriculture Immersion Program is cultivating the next generation of conservation leaders | Montezuma Land Conservancy

Keep It Colorado also launched the Emerging Conservation Opportunities (ECO) program to strengthen and expand all of these initiatives and create new opportunities – with goals to provide financial assistance to nonprofit land trusts for completing conservation projects, and lead to more innovative, relevant and sustainable conservation opportunities. New pursuits will include **Land Trust Alliance partnered programming**, with training for and implementation of strategies coalition members can leverage to create a more just, diverse, equitable and inclusive conservation sector, and **recreational access opportunity expansion**, through pursuit of new conservation tools, landowner incentives, and legislative and policy efforts to protect landowners' liability.

EMERGING ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES FORUM

We provide a forum for exploring and examining emerging issues and opportunities, including trends, tools and creative approaches that advance the pace of conservation and encourage innovation in conservation.

In 2022 Keep It Colorado continued to serve as an incubator and cultivator of ideas, approaches and solutions that led to the formation or continuation of initiatives in our four other focus areas. By exploring emerging issues and opportunities with our members and identifying the needs of the coalition, we're able to create new programs, services and collaborative opportunities that meet those needs. We use a variety of mechanisms for these explorations – including convenings, annual meetings and Circle calls as well as 1:1 conversations and online surveys.



Members and partners convened throughout 2022 to discuss statewide conservation planning - an initiative resulting from the Emerging Issues & Opportunities Forum.

MEMBER CONNECTION AND COALITION BUILDING

We create opportunities for members to come together to move the community forward in unison and reach common conservation goals.

Spring Summit

We convened our members at Colorado Parks and Wildlife's Partners in the Outdoors Conference where our theme was "The Ideal State of Conservation." Conversations centered on climate resiliency and diversity, equity, inclusion and justice, and guest speakers included representatives from the Colorado Department of Agriculture and The Nature Conservancy-Colorado.

Summer Regional Meetings. This year the Keep It Colorado team traveled to Loveland, Durango and Fraser to meet in person with coalition members. Representing a majority of member organizations, discussions focused on water as it relates to land conservation. The groups had fun creating vision boards for their "why" and the ideal state of conservation in Colorado. Each meeting also featured the unique opportunity to tour a conserved property – a wonderful way to experience the benefits of land conservation.

"Keep It Colorado is doing a fantastic job listening to its members, focusing on the right tasks, and representing the conservation community."

- Melissa Arnold,
Land Officer,
Boulder County
Parks & Open Space



Members in the southwest region convened in Durango. The meeting featured a tour of Oxbow Park and Preserve, led by La Plata Open Space Conservancy and City of Durango.

MEMBER CONNECTION AND COALITION BUILDING (cont'd)

Conservation Showcase

A Virtual Conservation Showcase shared stories of conservation and the many benefits it provides. People from across the state joined us to hear about Colorado's newest state park, wetlands protection, the multifaceted nature of local ranching and farming, volunteer stewardship and citizen science, engaging the next generation of conservationists, and bringing back the "American Serengeti."

Public Agency Roundtable

A roundtable conversation brought together open space agency and conservation district members to share recent agency successes, challenges and obstacles, and to discuss relationships with land trusts.

Fall Policy Summit

About 60 members and partners attended (in-person and virtually) our annual Fall Policy Summit in Denver, where we discussed the coalition's policy activities in 2022 and collected input on priorities for the 2023 legislative session.

Circle Calls

Virtual "Circle" calls continued to be popular touch points for members involved in leadership, operations, communications, development, stewardship and conservation for their organizations. Community policy calls also took place throughout the legislative session. In all, 46 calls brought members together in 2022.



Public Agencies and Land Trusts Working in Partnership

A panel discussion featured four land trusts and four local public agencies with long-standing partnerships in conservation. They shared strategies, experiences and lessons learned – and the conservation successes that have resulted from their collaborations.

.....

"It was fantastic. I think a focus on good news and how we can all learn from each other is both beneficial to advancing conservation as well as community building."

- Amy Graziano, Director of Outreach,
Douglas Land Conservancy



Water Law in a Nutshell

Forty representatives from land trusts attended a day-long webinar about water law, which Keep It Colorado hosted in partnership with Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust. Members found it an invaluable way to learn about the complexities of water law in the West and its connection to land conservation.

ADVANCING A CULTURE OF CONSERVATION

We connect more people in Colorado to conservation – past, present and future – through outreach, education and engagement, and collaborations and partnership-building.

Elevating Conservation: A Multi-pronged Campaign

In 2022 we launched a multi-pronged campaign to elevate the work of land trusts and landowners, promote the public benefits of conservation, and celebrate the contributions of many who are “keeping it Colorado.”

Learning from Landowners: A Conversation Series with Keep It Colorado

We heard strong interest from land trusts in landowner-to-landowner learning that builds on the empowering belief that landowners are the best stewards of and spokespersons for the land. To that end we created a story series about the creative ways landowners are tackling challenges – from succession planning to ecosystem resilience to enhanced agricultural viability. Land trusts were encouraged to incorporate these stories into their outreach and education efforts. [View all Learning from Landowners stories.](#)

Educational Resources for Landowners

Members expressed a common need to help landowners understand what’s involved in permanently conserving land, and what their roles and responsibilities are once they’ve done so. Many land trusts have educational resources for this; many do not. We created two resources: one for people considering permanently conserving their land, and one for those who’ve purchased a property that has already been conserved. Members incorporated these into their outreach - and landowners shared them with their peers as well. [View landowner resources.](#)

Dispelling Myths

Our public relations efforts worked to correct misinformation being spread about the U.S. government’s recommendation to create locally led, voluntary campaigns to conserve and restore 30 percent of America’s lands and waters by 2030. Our *Colorado Sun* op ed, [Opinion: Critics of land conservation easements have twisted the concept beyond reality](#), describes conservation’s true role in land and water protection, and the voluntary nature of conservation easements.

Fall Reception and Awards Ceremony

To honor the many people who make conservation possible, from landowners to legislators to volunteers, we held our inaugural Fall Reception at the American Mountaineering Center in Golden. We celebrated nine “Conservation Heroes” as well as 11 photographers, who submitted photos and essays expressing their personal connection to the land. [View the photo album.](#)



Now, we have a healthy population of beavers. Half of the wetland is moist, the ponds are thriving. Because beavers build natural fire breaks and create patches of wetland that restore groundwater, they can make landscapes more resistant to fire and drought.
— Marjorie Westermann, landowner



Our first inaugural Fall Reception celebrated nine Conservation Heroes and 11 Colorado photographers.

Peak Partner:



Keep It Colorado used a variety of digital campaigns to create education and awareness about **conservation**, the work of **land trusts**, and the **public benefits** of this work - as well as to elevate the work of Keep It Colorado as a **coalition**.

WEBSITE

Increase in 2022 compared to 2021:

45% unique visitors

37% site traffic

30% page views

Popular pages:

"Learning from Landowners"

1,791 visits Oct.-Dec.

Google Ads campaigns drove traffic to pages about the coalition, land trusts and conservation:

"Meet Keep It Colorado"

"Resources"

"Landowner Resources"

SOCIAL MEDIA

Increase in 2022 compared to 2021:

221% Facebook reach*

502% Instagram reach

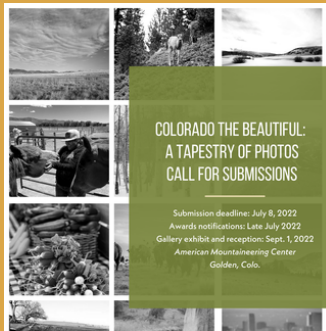
51% Instagram page visits

63% Facebook likes and follows

*The number of people who saw any content from or about our page.

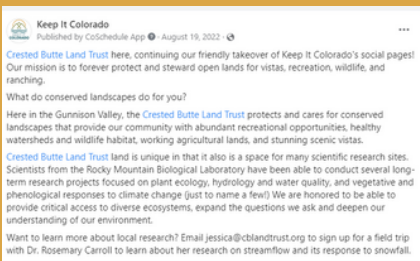
POPULAR AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

Campaign 1:
Colorado the Beautiful:
Tapestry of Photos
(Apr.-Sep.)

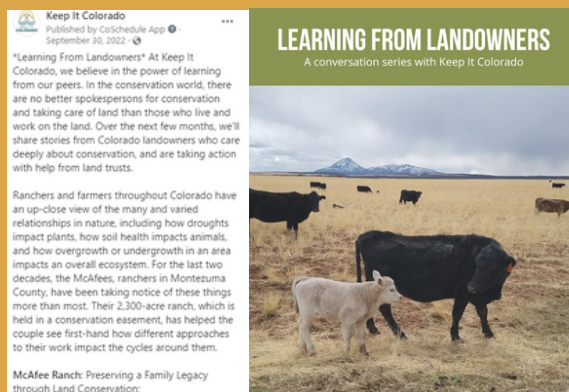


Single social media post:
Reach: 11,314
Impressions: 17,200

Campaign 2:
Friendly take-overs
of our social pages
(June-Aug.)



Campaign 3:
"Learning from Landowners"
stories
(Sep.-Dec.)



Campaign 4:
Educational resources for
landowners
(Oct.-Dec.)

New Tools Available to Navigate Conservation Easements

Public News Service

Single radio story reach:
Min. Audience:
1,789,939

MEASURING THE VALUE OF CONSERVATION

Conserved Acres.....

One way of measuring how much value conservation efforts provide is to calculate number of acres conserved. Below is a snapshot of acres conserved by coalition members in Colorado in 2022.

Members	Acres conserved in 2022	Total acres conserved since the orgs' inception
Land Trusts <small>Accounts for properties under conservation easement or held in fee.</small>	78,000+	3,182,000+
Open Space Agencies <small>Accounts for properties brought into the open space system and conserved.</small>	47,900+	961,000+
Total	125,300+	4,143,000+

Larger conservation organizations often work with partners—such as other land trusts or government agencies—to purchase land and conservation easements while other organizations manage and steward those lands over the long term. In addition, agencies often partner with each other to purchase and conserve properties and/or hold easements jointly. In some cases, total acres conserved since inception includes acres transferred to or held by other agencies. We took care to eliminate overlap; however, some duplication may still exist.

Source: Data reported by 22 land trusts and 11 open space agency members, Jan. 2023.

Conservation Activities Helped Protect...

- Farm lands, rangelands, grasslands and prairies
- Wildlife habitat and movement corridors
- Water rights
- Major waterways and tributary creeks
- Scenic viewsheds
- Wetland habitat
- Open spaces, parks and trails
- Lands sharing boundaries with public land and other privately conserved land



The Multifaceted Nature of Conservation

A top priority of Keep It Colorado is elevating our members as conservation leaders. Beyond number of acres conserved, their accomplishments are varied and multifaceted. Here we look at community-centered conservation, innovative and expanded approaches, and ways members are creating a conservation sector that is more diverse, equitable and inclusive.

Land trusts and open space agencies hosted or engaged:

- 1,400+** Events
- 36,000+** Event participants
- 7,400+** Volunteers

People connected with nature and each other:

- Wildflower walks and barbed-wire pulls
- Book clubs, bird walks and bike tours
- Coffee chats, community dinners and cocktails
- Plein-air painting and picnics
- Local history and geology tours
- Tribal gatherings and land dedication ceremonies
- Stargazing and astronomy programs
- Film screenings, fishing expeditions and field trips



Volunteers on a stewardship project at Coffman Ranch | Aspen Valley Land Trust

Innovation & Expansion

- Getting more youth outdoors and on conserved lands
- Fellowship and scholarship programs
- Pilot projects focused on fire mitigation, habitat enhancement, and wetland and stream restoration
- Exploring new easement terms for landowners
- Remote monitoring using satellite and mapping technologies
- Indigenous access to harvest plants on private lands
- Climate resiliency initiatives
- Local food guides and connecting people to local producers
- Land access programs for new and beginning agricultural producers
- Public feedback mechanisms, text notification systems

Accessible nature for every body | City of Fort Collins Natural Areas



Volunteers stepped in as:

- Ditch cleaners and noxious weed removers
- Tree planters and native plant gardeners
- Event planners
- Naturalists and outdoor educators
- Park rangers
- Fence removers
- Cultural historians
- Raptor monitors and easement monitors
- Trail builders and campground restorers

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

- Bilingual signage on conserved properties and trails; outdoor education programs; texting/outreach activities; and websites
- ADA-compliant websites; adaptive bike trails and devices
- Local GOCO Generation Wild initiatives working to break down barriers to accessing the outdoors
- Panel discussions about inclusiveness in the outdoors
- Partnerships with Spanish-speaking groups for event planning
- Partnerships with Indigenous community members for joint hosted events, management and grazing plans, and native plant collection programs
- Partnerships with conservation corps saw crews composed of all women and gender-nonbinary individuals
- Free day passes and transportation to open spaces and events
- Senior and older-adult programming
- Relationship building with Latinx and LGBTQ advocacy groups
- Workforce recruitment to reflect communities served
- Action plans to create more diverse, equitable and inclusive practices in conservation, procurement and volunteer leadership
- Staff, board and volunteer recruitment, training and hiring
- Board committees devoted to diversity, equity and inclusion
- Cultural responsiveness and inclusion strategic plans

“If we aren't protecting land forever for everyone, who are we protecting it for?”

- Melissa Daruna, Executive Director, Keep It Colorado



Panelists talked about inclusivity in the outdoors at an Estes Valley Land Trust breakfast | Linda Lidov

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT 2022

INCOME:

Foundations and donations:	\$284,152
Restricted grants:	\$872,000
Membership dues:	\$150,100
Fees and corporate support:	\$18,620
Total:	\$1,324,872

Keep It Colorado is primarily funded through membership dues from land trusts, open space agencies, conservation professionals and nonprofit partners, as well as grants. Our core expenses go toward the programs and services we provide to the community and our members, staff salaries, and organizational capacity.

2021 to 2022

100%

membership retention

11.7%

membership growth

EXPENSES

Programs and services:	\$328,230
Restricted programs:	\$558,308
General administrative:	\$311,942
Total:	\$1,198,480



Silver Spur Ranch in Tabernash, conserved in partnership with Colorado Headwaters Land Trust | Linda Lidov

.....KEEP IT COLORADO STAFF

Melissa Daruna
Executive Director



Linda Lidov
Director of Membership
& Communications



Hannah George
Programs and Events
Coordinator



Katelyn Toigo
Conservation Innovation
Fellow



..... BOARD OF DIRECTORS in 2022

Rob Bleiberg (Programs Committee Chair)

Executive Director, Colorado West Land Trust

Jeffrey Boring

Executive Director, Estes Valley Land Trust

Tony Caligiuri (Secretary)

President and CEO, Colorado Open Lands

Travis Custer (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee Chair)

Executive Director, Montezuma Land Conservancy

Carlos Fernández (Development Committee Chair)

Colorado State Director, The Nature Conservancy

Erik Glenn (Policy Committee Vice Chair)

Executive Director, Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust

Amanda Hill (ex officio)

Southwest and California Program Manager, Land Trust Alliance

Jessica Jay

Founder and Principal, Attorney Conservation Law, P.C.

Rebecca Jewett (Chair)

President and CEO, Palmer Land Conservancy

Jim Petterson (Policy Committee Chair)

Vice President, Mountain West Region, The Trust for Public Land

Anna Schmid (Treasurer)

Controller, Gates Family Foundation

Suzanne Stephens (Vice Chair)

Executive Director, Aspen Valley Land Trust

COALITION MEMBERS

Public Agencies

- Adams County Parks and Open Space
- Arapahoe County Open Spaces
- Boulder County Parks and Open Space
- City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks
- City of Fort Collins Natural Areas
- City of Loveland Open Lands & Trails
- Colorado Parks & Wildlife
- Douglas County Conservation District
- Eagle County Open Space
- Jefferson County Open Space
- Larimer County Natural Resources Department
- Pitkin County Open Space & Trails
- San Miguel County Open Space
- Town of Crested Butte

Land Trusts

- Aspen Valley Land Trust
- Central Colorado Conservancy
- Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust
- Colorado Open Lands
- Colorado Headwaters Land Trust
- Colorado West Land Trust
- Crested Butte Land Trust
- Douglas Land Conservancy
- Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
- Eagle Valley Land Trust
- Estes Valley Land Trust
- La Plata Open Space Conservancy
- Montezuma Land Conservancy
- Mountain Area Land Trust
- Palmer Land Conservancy
- Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- San Miguel Conservation Foundation
- Southern Plains Land Trust
- The Conservation Fund
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Trust for Public Land
- Western Rivers Conservancy

Conservation Champions

- Allan C. Beezley, P.C.
- Colorado Historical Foundation
- Colorado Natural Heritage Program
- Conservation Law, P.C.
- Conservation Resource Center Tax Credit Exchange
- Conservation Tax Credit Transfer
- David C. Conley, PC
- Greater Arkansas River Nature Association
- Holsinger Law
- Kaplan Kirsch & Rockwell LLP
- Lake Fork Valley Conservancy
- Law Office of Lawrence R. Kueter
- Otten Johnson Robinson Neff + Ragonetti PC
- Rare Earth Science, LLC
- Rocky Mountain Mitigation
- Sara J. Streight Attorney at Law
- South Metro Land Conservancy
- Tax Credit Connection
- Timothy Sweeney, Attorney at Law, LLC

Near Tennessee Pass, conserved in partnership with Eagle Valley Land Trust | Steve Sunday

Thank you, partners and supporters!

