

Conserving Colorado

A 10-year Roadmap for the Future
of Private Land Conservation

2023





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Executive Summary

Colorado is a special, uniquely beautiful and diverse place. The landscapes here are unlike anywhere else, from the expansive eastern plains to the iconic 14ers to the Grand Mesa – and the forests, canyons, high plains, rivers, and everything in between. In addition to their intrinsic value as natural places, people’s connection to these lands is real, it’s visceral, and it dates back to time immemorial. Today, Colorado’s landscapes support a productive agricultural economy, a booming outdoor recreation industry, and thriving cities – all of which have relied on conservation for decades and will continue to rely on it for generations to come.

The majority of lands in Colorado – roughly 60% – are privately owned. While in private ownership, the benefits they offer to the public are widespread. These lands feed people, even beyond Colorado’s borders. They are anchored by the plants and trees that are signs of a healthy ecosystem. The streams and rivers that run through them sustain life for a variety of animals. The conservation movement has worked with many landowners to support these landscapes and, for decades, hundreds of private landowners have protected and stewarded lands in partnership with land trusts (nonprofit conservation organizations) and local and state public agencies such as open space and natural resources departments.

Building on the historical success of the conservation movement as a foundation, the work of private land conservation is growing and evolving to better meet Colorado’s needs. As the demands for natural resources such as land and water increase and change, so must our approaches to protecting the lands and waters people and nature need to thrive.

The next decade will be particularly important for securing a healthy, livable future. Colorado’s people, landscapes and wildlife are experiencing the impacts of a changing climate every day, from record-breaking wildfires, extreme drought and dwindling water supplies, to more severe weather patterns and the loss of habitat for native plants and animals. Addressing these challenges requires

a multitude of creative solutions and approaches – conservation being critical among them.

Conserving Colorado: A 10-year Roadmap for the Future of Private Land Conservation considers what the lands movement will require over the next 10 years to rise to the challenges before us, and to remain robust and relevant far into the future – as is required by the “forever” nature of perpetual land conservation.

Designed by and with the conservation organizations and partners that comprise the Keep It Colorado coalition, this collaborative plan has rallied land trusts and other conservation-minded groups around common goals for land, water and species protection in Colorado – while carefully considering the many needs of people and how they interact with and live on the land. The plan also allows for individual organizations to bring their mission-driven work forward to serve a bigger vision for the future of conservation. Building on the conservation successes of the past several decades, *Conserving Colorado* offers a roadmap with a focus on protecting more landscapes; supporting and engaging more people in conservation and stewardship; and building a strong, healthy and impactful conservation movement that can successfully carry this work into the future.

While this roadmap speaks primarily to the work of the private land conservation sector, it is unique in that it takes a holistic view of the conservation movement and what it needs to be successful.

Land trusts work closely with local, state and federal agencies to conserve land. For example, Fishers Peak State Park in Trinidad, Colorado, was conserved through a joint effort between the City of Trinidad, The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. This roadmap is designed to connect with larger statewide planning efforts for a more coordinated approach to protecting land, water, wildlife, agriculture, outdoor recreation, and climate and community resiliency.

The roadmap establishes five strategic pillars, or areas of focus, that guide land conservation approaches, community-centered conservation efforts, and the support the conservation sector needs to make it all happen. The goals are oriented around ensuring that ecosystems and communities are resilient to the impacts of climate change, and sharing strategies that leverage conservation as a climate action tool to mitigate the effects of drought, wildfire, water loss and biodiversity loss. The roadmap also acknowledges that conservation work and programming can best serve Colorado's people by including all voices, especially those that have been historically underrepresented in conservation or are disproportionately impacted by environmental threats. And it identifies concrete strategies to increase the resources available to conservation organizations and landowners to make land conservation and community conservation goals a reality.

OUR VISION OF SUCCESS IS BOLD, BUT ACHIEVABLE.

If we are successful, over the next 10 years, we will double the number of acres protected, from 3.3 million to 6.6 million acres; double the number of people engaged in and supporting conservation; and double the resources available to advance diverse approaches to conservation work. This major investment in conservation across Colorado will help protect the quality of life we all share.



Arkansas Valley | Central Colorado Conservancy

Why Is the Roadmap Needed, and Why Now?

As Colorado grows and changes, the environment we live in is also changing. The climate crisis is a severe and growing threat, but strategic, coordinated conservation of climate-resilient landscapes can be part of the solution. Population growth and increased demands on dwindling water resources pose significant risks to wildlife habitat, local agriculture and healthy ecosystems, but innovative approaches and collaborative conservation efforts are effective in addressing these threats as well.

There has never been a more urgent moment for a coordinated, strategic and collaborative approach to private land conservation. Land trusts and their partners in private land conservation are poised to rise to the challenge. Voluntary private land conservation in Colorado has successfully protected over 3.3 million acres since 1965, while local government open space programs have conserved an additional 1 million acres. This long history of impactful conservation provides a strong foundation for the future and elevates the important role private land conservation plays in securing a Colorado where people, lands, waters and wildlife thrive.

Five Strategic Pillars

Conserving Colorado is organized under five focus areas or "pillars," each accompanied by a set of goals and strategies for action:

- **Climate-resilient Landscapes:** Protecting more resilient and connected landscapes, healthy ecosystems, and biodiversity.
- **Community-centered Conservation & Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ):** Authentically engaging diverse perspectives and experiences in conservation, so we can conserve more land and deliver more direct benefits to more people.
- **Collaborative Water Solutions:** Increasing work with water conservation partners on solutions and projects that protect water for nature and people.
- **Resilient Agriculture:** Protecting more farmland and ranchland; expanding opportunities to cultivate landscape and economic resiliency; and increasing equitable access to local food production, land ownership and conservation programs.
- **Lasting Conservation Movement:** Increasing awareness of and funding for this critical work and building a conservation movement that is more responsive and relevant to Coloradans now and in the future.

Goals and Metrics

Goals in the roadmap include:

- Strategically conserving climate-resilient and biodiverse landscapes.
- Collaborating on land and water conservation solutions that support healthy rivers, landscapes and communities.
- Protecting landscapes with vital water resources and habitats.
- Increasing conservation of farms and ranches and supporting landowners' ability to cultivate lasting landscape and economic resiliency.
- Increasing community-centered conservation that engages people who have been underrepresented in conservation.
- Expanding conservation outcomes that equitably benefit all Coloradans.
- Incorporating different perspectives on and approaches to conservation.
- Supporting more equitable access to landownership and conservation programs.
- Increasing awareness and support for private land conservation, including expanding policies, tools, and funding needed to protect more key lands and engage more people.

These goals will help create a stronger, more relevant and resilient conservation movement well into the future.

In 10 years, success looks like:

- Doubling the amount of protected land, an additional 3.3 million acres.
- Doubling the engagement in conservation efforts and programs.
- Doubling the resources to support the myriad approaches to conservation work.



Call to Action

Keep It Colorado is well positioned to facilitate and support state-level implementation of the roadmap's goals, and provide the convening structure for conservation organizations to share ideas, collaborate on solutions and track progress.

The details of implementation will be driven by the conservation community, and will therefore require participation from the Keep It Colorado membership and partners in conservation. Colorado's land trusts and public agencies focused on conservation will be instrumental in engaging landowners and communities and in delivering conservation outcomes.

The roadmap is designed to allow individual organizations to build on their current successes and bring their mission-driven work to the forefront in service of the larger vision. This will give organizations the ability to lean into specific goals that align with their unique current and future work. Each organization approaches conservation in different ways, and this flexibility allows for a robust, relevant and multifaceted approach to putting the roadmap into action and delivering lasting, durable, and impactful conservation.

The conservation sector cannot do this work alone, however. This roadmap calls for ambitious action that can lead to the transformational change needed to secure a more sustainable future for Colorado. For conservation to succeed, more robust and innovative funding, incentives and tools must be developed. Also needed for conservation to succeed at scale are policies that support these tools and programs. Finally, it is vital to increase the number and diversity of people who engage with conservation organizations and work in their own communities in order to create a lasting, relevant and successful conservation movement.

The coalition's call to action is that people across Colorado see themselves as part of the statewide

conservation movement – supporting conservation wherever they can and in whatever ways they can. We ask that policymakers look for legislative opportunities to support and enhance conservation programs and incentives, reduce barriers to entry, and create new programs and incentives that keep Colorado, Colorado. We seek funding partners eager to support conservation approaches that include land protection, community programming and organizational capacity needed to accomplish the roadmap's goals. And we call on Coloradans everywhere to support conservation efforts in their community by volunteering, advocating, voting, donating, participating in programs, and considering conservation as a lasting opportunity for their Colorado.

Developing the Roadmap

Conserving Colorado would not have been possible without the dedicated support and participation of Colorado's land trusts, public agency partners, nonprofit partners and generous funders. The project was guided by the Keep It Colorado board of directors and an external advisory council comprised of a diverse cross-section of voices from within and adjacent to the conservation sector. The process allowed time to listen to those doing conservation and stewardship work to understand their vision for the future and the current challenges they face.

Additionally, the process included perspectives from those who have been underrepresented in conservation discussions, giving the conservation sector more ideas about the opportunities ahead. Technical trainings allowed conservation professionals to explore new data and tools for landscape analysis. Development of the plan's strategic pillars, goals and metrics was informed by land trusts, open space agencies and their partners during facilitated meetings.

The project was facilitated by a team of consultants and Keep It Colorado staff. We thank the many individuals and organizations for walking on this journey with us, and for sharing Keep It Colorado's vision to create a Colorado where people, lands, waters and wildlife thrive.



Welcome to the Movement: How We Got Here

Voluntary private land conservation has ensured the permanent protection of over 3.3 million acres of wildlife habitat, farms and ranches, scenic viewsheds, open space, trails and parks since 1965. Thanks to dedicated landowners, land trusts and public agency partners, these protected landscapes serve as a critical step toward a sustainable future for the state. Because of their collective efforts, funded in large part by generous state tax incentives and innovative funding programs such as Great Outdoors Colorado, Colorado is a national leader in conservation. Building on this success, the *Conserving Colorado* roadmap sets the course to conserve another 3.3 million acres over the next 10 years.

Private land conservation also influences our daily lives. Anyone who has enjoyed clean water, Colorado beef, a Palisade peach or a Pueblo chile; climbed a 14er or trekked across the prairie; marveled at a moose or landed a rainbow trout has experienced the benefits of private land conservation and stewardship. Even when these activities take place on public lands, conservation of surrounding private lands supports the extensive habitat, connected landscapes and scenic vistas that make those experiences possible.

But as the state's population grows and the climate continues to change, pressures on our natural resources increase, and so do the demand and impact on our lands and waters.

Those changes have a reverberating effect on the conservation sector and, especially, on the organizations working to conserve, protect and steward those lands. In response, the field of conservation itself is also evolving.

A few core challenges have become evident: How can we as a state increase conservation and create a broader, more diverse set of conservation approaches that will lead to a viable, healthy future? How can the conservation sector be better supported to not only meet the increasing demand for conservation, but also thrive and succeed?

As the conservation community convened to discuss the future of its work and the challenges Colorado faces, several **innovative and inspiring opportunities** emerged. Through these opportunities, the conservation community envisions a more robust and lasting conservation movement that carries the strong legacy of successful efforts moving forward.

These opportunities include:

- Elevating the critical role private land conservation plays in solving the increasingly pressing need to protect healthy ecosystems and native biodiversity.
- Elevating the role private land conservation plays in helping communities thrive in the face of evolving factors such as population growth, climate impacts and economic challenges.
- Increasing the diversity of voices engaged in private land conservation through expanded community involvement and open, authentic engagement.
- Increasing Coloradans' connection to, and understanding of, private land conservation – because people protect what they know and care about.
- Expanding the amount of support the conservation sector needs to accomplish its collective work today and in the future – including land protection activities, stewardship programs, and capacity to explore new services for landowners and communities.



The Strategic Pillars

Roadmap to a Successful and Impactful Conservation Movement

In order to achieve a future for Colorado where people, lands, water and wildlife thrive, conservation efforts need to be multifaceted, robust and innovative. Continued protection of critical lands is key. Considering new approaches to conservation that engage more people is equally important. Advancing a conservation movement that leads to a bright future for the state also requires supportive and forward-thinking policies and funding.

The private land conservation community has identified five strategic pillars of work that will define the future of conservation and enable us to successfully reach our conservation goals. Unlike more traditional conservation plans, these pillars focus on the **landscapes, the people and the support the conservation movement** needs to succeed.

The Main Themes of the Five Pillars Are:

- **Climate-resilient Landscapes:** Protecting more resilient and connected landscapes, healthy ecosystems, and biodiversity.
- **Community-centered Conservation & Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ):** Authentically engaging diverse perspectives and experiences in conservation, so we can conserve more land and deliver more direct benefits to more people.
- **Collaborative Water Solutions:** Increasing work with water conservation partners on solutions and projects that protect water for nature and people.
- **Resilient Agriculture:** Protecting more farmland and ranchland; expanding opportunities to cultivate landscape and economic resiliency; and increasing equitable access to local food production, land ownership and conservation programs.
- **Lasting Conservation Movement:** Increasing awareness of and funding for this critical work and building a conservation movement that is more responsive and relevant to Coloradans now and in the future.

These pillars are interconnected and collectively necessary to support a lasting and well-rounded future for conservation. Conservation organizations function in a variety of ways, have diverse missions and approaches to their work, and serve different communities and populations around the state.

This multifaceted approach means that all organizations can find their work reflected in this shared vision for the future, even if every pillar's goals are not directly applicable to them. The pillars and the overall roadmap allow organizations to bring their specific skills and expertise to the table in service of something larger than any individual organization – a lasting future for private land conservation and all Coloradans.



Springtime | Colorado Headwaters Land Trust

Climate-resilient Landscapes:

Protect resilient and connected landscapes; diverse, healthy and functional ecosystems; and thriving biodiversity.

OVERVIEW

Colorado's natural and working landscapes, waterways and rich biodiversity are at the heart of what makes our state unique. Our forests, grasslands, wetlands, rivers and other ecosystems support our quality of life by providing clean air and water, critical wildlife habitat, carbon storage, aesthetic beauty, fertile soils, and abundant recreation and economic opportunities. People as well as the plants, animals, and landscapes that define our state are dependent on healthy ecosystems and biodiversity. Colorado's lands and waters also face many challenges, including climate change, drought, wildfire, human development and invasive species.

As these challenges increase, ecosystem fragmentation continues to increase as well, putting native biodiversity at risk. Increasing strategic conservation efforts that expand connectivity of climate-resilient landscapes will be vital to protecting the state's biodiversity and ecosystems.

Goal 1. Strategically identify, conserve and connect the most critical landscapes to support long-term climate resilience for native ecosystems and biodiversity.

Goal 2. Contribute to the conservation, restoration and/or appropriate management of an adequate representation of Colorado's terrestrial and aquatic habitats needed to sustain viable and resilient populations of native and other important species.



Strategies for Action

- Use consistent data sets in the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP)'s Colorado Data Explorer (CODEX) and The Nature Conservancy's Resilient and Connected Network (RCN), as well as the best available science and local expertise, to prioritize landscapes and elevate projects with the most biodiversity and climate resiliency.
- Work with state, federal and philanthropic funders to identify and secure resources for protection and restoration of priority landscapes and ecosystems – while helping funders recognize that the priority landscapes of the future may look different from those of today, and that landscapes outside of these priorities also have conservation value.
- Protect, develop or expand conservation tools, including, but not limited to, the state conservation easement tax credit and alternative valuation methods for conservation easements and ecosystem services that increase opportunities for landowners to engage in voluntary conservation and restoration programs.

The desired outcomes of these goals are that common species remain common; rare and sensitive species are protected; and imperiled species recover through strategic and collaborative conservation efforts.

The 2015 State Wildlife Action Plan identified at least 159 species of wildlife as Species of Greatest Conservation Need. The same plan also identified 192 plants and animals other than vertebrates as species of great conservation need, and many of them are found solely in Colorado. We have already lost 12 native vertebrates from Colorado, and fish and amphibians are particularly at risk.



Tiger Moth, an Imperiled Species, Lays Eggs on Dwarf Milkweed, An Imperiled Plant in Colorado | Michael Menefee

RESILIENT AND CONNECTED NETWORK

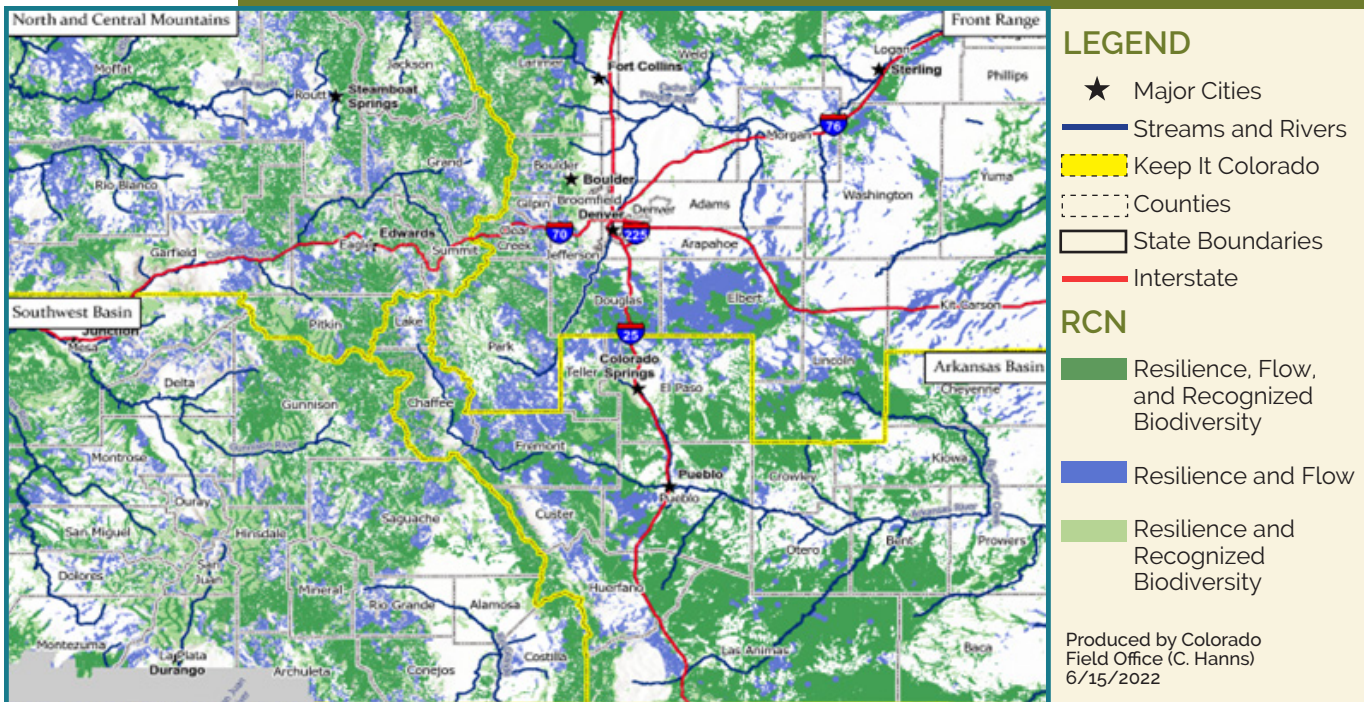


Figure 1 | Resilient and connected landscapes. Lands of federally recognized Tribal Nations are shown in grey, as The Nature Conservancy has not yet secured permission to share these data. Data Source: **The Nature Conservancy**, 2022.

Building on the important successes of private land conservation over the past several decades, increased protection of climate-resilient private lands is essential to ensure that Colorado's biodiversity can thrive in the face of climate change.

According to The Nature Conservancy's RCN analysis, there are more than 16 million acres of unconserved climate-resilient, privately owned lands in Colorado that are critical for the habitat connectivity needed to sustain biodiversity under future climate conditions. The conversion of these acres from working farms and ranches, forests, prairies and other natural areas to developed uses would fragment ecosystems, making it harder for nature to survive and thrive, especially in the face of a changing climate. **Figure 1** above demonstrates the climate-resilient network across the entire state of Colorado.

The RCN analysis integrated data on climate-resilient sites, landscape connectivity in the form of climate flow, and biodiversity where survey data were available. It is focused on natural (or undeveloped) lands, but also minimally developed working lands, including some rangeland and ranches. The RCN analysis is not designed to analyze the climate resiliency of croplands or more developed areas.

The RCN analysis is a decision-support resource – it is informative and offers an innovative evaluation of landscapes. However, it is just one tool land conservation organizations can use to prioritize and strategically conserve lands that provide the climate resiliency species need to adapt to changing habitat conditions.

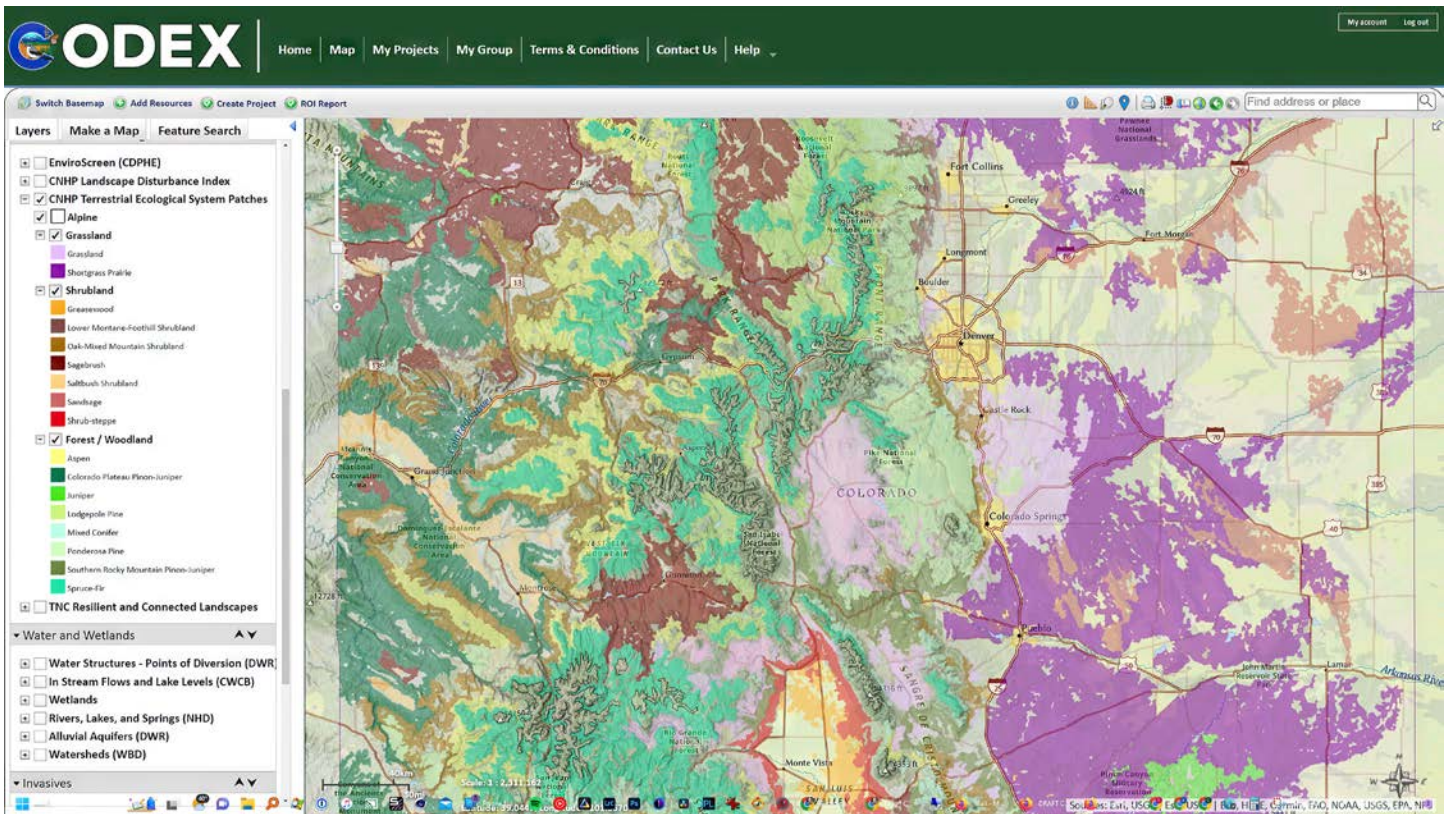


Figure 2 | CNHP Terrestrial Ecological System Patches, accessed from **CODEX**, March 2023. Citation: Colorado Natural Heritage Program. 2012. Terrestrial Ecological Systems. Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, USA. Data current as of 2011.

In addition to protecting biodiverse habitats, the connectivity of those habitats at appropriate scales is also vitally important. Ecologists have determined that, for an ecosystem to be healthy and functional, a minimum amount of contiguous acreage is required. This “minimum viable patch size” varies widely across the different types of ecosystems found in Colorado. Depending on the ecosystem, the minimum viable patch size can range between 1,000 and 30,000 acres, for example. This information is critical for prioritizing land conservation efforts that provide connected habitat for biodiversity and ecosystem services to society.

To assist in conservation planning, CNHP has developed a map of viable ecosystem patches across the state (see **Figure 2**). These patches are important conservation targets and can be further expanded by restoring adjacent landscapes as well.

We are at a unique and urgent moment in time for protecting Colorado’s essential natural heritage.

Ongoing and increased voluntary private land conservation plays a critical role in enabling our unique and irreplaceable landscapes, rivers and wildlife to exist and thrive into the future.

The survival of these systems will inextricably influence the health of nature and people for generations to come.

View a Case Study:
Eagle Valley Land Trust,
Creating a Sanctuary for Wildlife
and Their Habitat

PILLAR 2

Community-centered Conservation & Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice:

Justice: Ensure that the conservation community authentically engages, is relevant to, and better delivers equitable benefits to all Coloradans, including those who have been historically underrepresented in land conservation.

OVERVIEW

As Colorado's population and communities grow and change, one thing remains constant: Everyone depends on healthy, thriving lands and waters and everyone has unique ways of connecting to the natural world. The conservation movement has already expanded to incorporate innovative programming and projects that help meet evolving community needs – such as access to nature, local food and adequate water resources. However, across Colorado, challenges such as drought, wildfire, proximity to open space, and development can disproportionately impact some communities. Strategic community-centered conservation and programs can help address these challenges and further increase the impact of conservation efforts. Now is the time to include more voices, consider the places and communities that are experiencing greater impacts of a changing climate, and work to ensure that conservation benefits all.

More diverse perspectives on conservation can bring forward solutions and projects that better meet local communities' needs. For example, near Cortez, Colorado, the Montezuma Land Conservancy protected a farm and developed educational opportunities and paid internships for youth in the community, based upon direct feedback from local residents. Colorado's future will depend on ongoing conservation efforts, like those near Cortez, that fully reflect and engage the diversity of our state.

Goal 1. Increase community-centered conservation programs and projects that meet a variety of local needs and build a conservation workforce and leadership that reflect a changing Colorado.

Goal 2. Recognize and integrate different approaches to and perspectives about conservation, including traditional knowledge and those related to Indigenous rights, ownership and relationships with the land.

Goal 3. Deliver conservation outcomes that are accessible, attainable, and equitably benefit Colorado's many communities by developing reciprocal relationships and authentically engaging with Colorado's diverse communities, including underrepresented populations.



Outdoor Learning Labs | Montezuma Inspire Coalition

Strategies for Action

- Provide conservation sector-wide training, education opportunities and resources to help organizations achieve their diversity, equity, inclusion and justice goals.
 - Advocate for increased investments in transaction cost assistance, new conservation tools, and expanded current incentives, such as the state tax credit, that reduce financial barriers to land conservation.
 - Incorporate diverse perspectives at various local community levels in conservation planning and project development.
 - Co-create conservation projects with a diverse set of partners to deliver more direct benefits to more people.
 - Advocate for more streamlined administrative and application processes for funding and conservation programs.
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The health and wellbeing of all Coloradans and their communities increasingly rely on conservation.

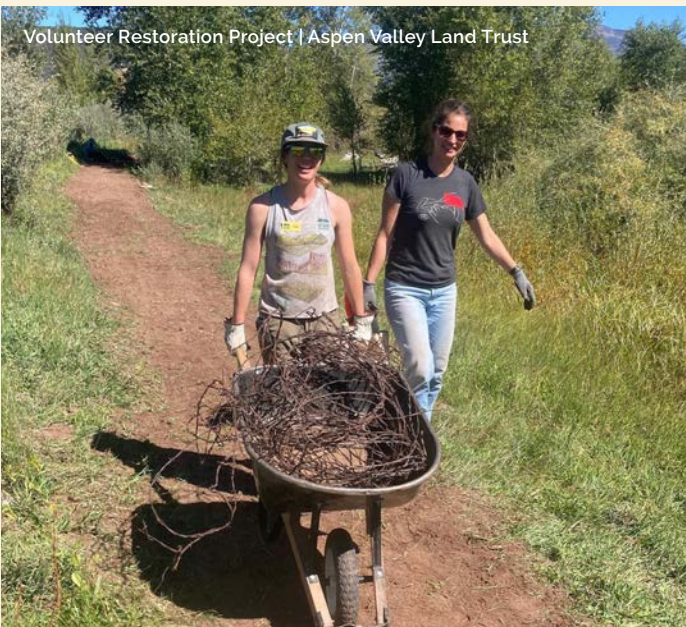
Investments in conservation also reflect community values around taking care of land and water, which provide a variety of public benefits.

Community-centered conservation is work that happens alongside members of a community, often in response to meeting changing economic, cultural, social or environmental needs.

In practice, this may look like:

- Fostering collaboration between landowners, land trusts and nonprofits to develop outreach and advocacy initiatives, educational workshops, stewardship projects or other activities that promote and further conservation efforts.
- Purchasing lands for public open space to provide adequate and equitable access to nature.
- Purchasing, owning or managing lands as “community conservancies,” parks, trails, community farms, preserves, research field sites or outdoor education centers.
- Developing community initiatives to address agriculture land affordability, food security, equitable access to agricultural land, and sustainable agricultural infrastructure.
- Supporting programs on conserved land that serve broader community needs, such as community agriculture or outdoor education, and stewardship programs.

Volunteer Restoration Project | Aspen Valley Land Trust



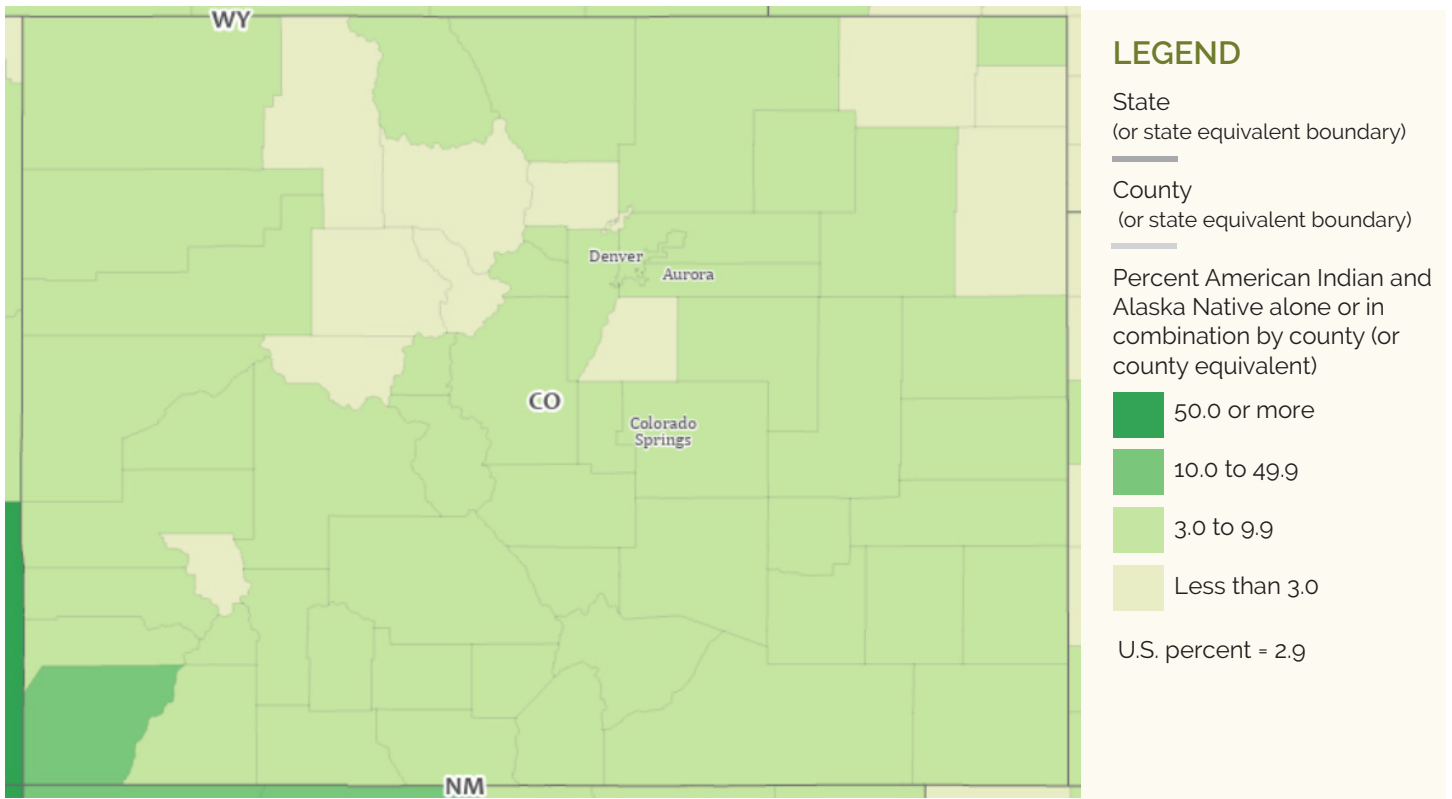


Figure 3. Percent of American Indian and Alaska Natives alone or in combination at the state, county, and census tract levels. **2020 Census Demographic Data Map Viewer**, accessed March 2023.

As more communities engage in conservation initiatives, the conservation movement can also learn about different conservation perspectives and relationships with the land from these various voices.

One community in particular is Indigenous and tribal populations, which have called Colorado's lands home for centuries. Native Americans continue to live in regions across much of the state (**see Figure 3**) and have unique connections to the landscape. Engaging and elevating Indigenous knowledge and voices in conservation initiatives is one opportunity to incorporate unique perspectives and approaches to caring for the land.

To create durable conservation at scale, the conservation community should recognize and incorporate Indigenous and other forms of traditional knowledge into conservation efforts.

By more fully understanding and including diverse priorities in conservation planning and opportunities, the conservation movement will be able to conserve lands and support land-based programs that benefit all Coloradans.

Authentically engaging communities, including people who are not currently involved in private land conservation or equitably experiencing the benefits of conserved lands, will allow the conservation movement to find new ways to serve more communities and reach more people. As conservation work evolves, expanding services and programs that better connect people to the landscapes around them will also allow conservation organizations to remain valuable and directly relevant to the communities they serve.

New tools can allow conservation organizations to overlay climate equity and environmental justice data with landscapes. Conservation efforts can consider ways in which transactional conservation, such as land protection and restoration, and community-centered conservation, such as programming and access to nature, affect and benefit people.

For example, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) has developed maps that indicate concentrations of **racial and ethnic diversity, low-income households, and people with disabilities** across Colorado.

In June 2022 CDPHE released the first version of an **interactive environmental justice and health mapping tool** that identifies areas with current and past environmental inequities, such as areas where disproportionately impacted communities have a greater health burden and/or face more environmental risks.

Additionally, Trust for Public Land's ParkServe tool can be used to demonstrate the percentage of residents in a given community **who live within a 10-minute walk** of a park, as well as the breakdown of park access according to race and ethnicity.

Colorado's land trusts have historically worked across many communities in Colorado, including in communities of color and under-resourced communities. More can and should be done within these communities to further conservation impact. These and other tools can be used to help conservation organizations, funders and Keep It Colorado members understand community demographics and design conservation efforts, programs and incentives that reduce barriers to access to conservation and lead to more impactful and equitable conservation.

Finally, as the conservation movement evolves, it is imperative that the people working in conservation reflect the diversity of the state. Proactively and authentically welcoming and including all people in the conservation sector, from a multitude of backgrounds and representing lived experiences, will create a culture that helps everyone feel safe and welcome in this work. This will involve exploring new methods of reaching people who may want to work in land conservation – and taking steps to remove barriers to entering the field. In turn, these efforts will diversify and grow the conservation workforce pipeline and the pool of applicants for conservation-related jobs – while weaving in perspectives and experiences that promise to keep conservation relevant for decades to come.



View a Case Study:
Montezuma Land Conservancy,
Working to Redefine Conservation

Collaborative Water Solutions:

Create more alignment between land and water conservation to support healthy rivers, sustainable landscapes, viable agriculture and thriving communities.

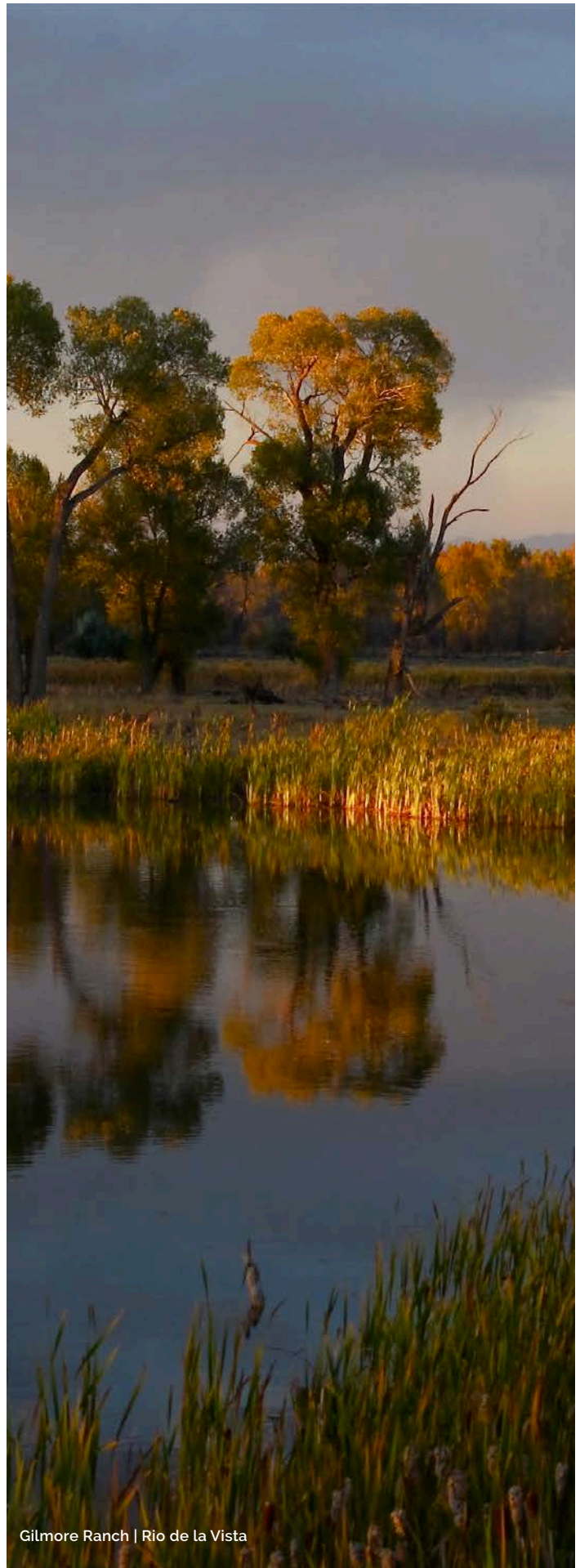
OVERVIEW

The importance of Colorado water cannot be overstated, and land and water conservation go hand in hand. Water is vital to nature and people and to our collective ability to thrive in the West. Our vision is to create win-win solutions to ensure healthy river and riparian ecosystems, recreational opportunities, productive and viable agriculture, vibrant and sustainable communities, and a strong economy.

Goal 1. Collaborate with water conservation organizations and Colorado Water Conservation Board Basin Roundtables on water conservation planning and solutions that support nature and people across Colorado.

Goal 2. Protect water rights on conserved lands and work with new or established tools that allow for increased flexibility in the administration and use of water rights for the benefit of habitat, communities, instream flows, water conservation and efficiency.

Goal 3. Prioritize protection of land with water resources, such as wetlands, riparian areas, rivers, streams, springs, and ground water aquifers, that provide critical habitat and ecosystem services.



Gilmore Ranch | Rio de la Vista

Strategies for Action

- Support and advocate for policies, tools, programming and incentives that increase flexibility for landowners to respond to evolving water demands while respecting Colorado's water laws and governance.
 - Build strong partnerships with the water conservation community and collaborate on opportunities to balance water needs for lands, people and nature.
 - Elevate the role of land trusts and local, regional and statewide public agencies as trusted partners to help address current and future water challenges through creative and innovative conservation projects and initiatives.
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Colorado River at Horsethief Canyon | Keep It Colorado

As a headwaters state, all of Colorado's major rivers and tributaries flow downstream to 18 states and Mexico, including the mighty Colorado River, which provides water to nearly 40 million people and irrigates 5.5 million acres of land. Most of our water supply originates in forests that serve critical wildlife habitat and riparian areas.

As climate change and growing demands for water threaten to eclipse diminishing supplies, the land conservation community recognizes the urgency to seek innovative and collaborative water solutions for a healthy and secure water future.

In addition to being a critical resource for people and nature in Colorado, water underpins the state's economy, making it possible for communities to flourish with local economies rooted in agriculture and outdoor recreation. Water-related recreation alone contributes \$19 billion to the state's economy. Protection of the lands that surround these waterways, access points for recreation and healthy water ecosystems is vitally important to sustaining that economy.

Working with and protecting water rights has been a long-standing practice in the land conservation sector. Now there are even more urgent opportunities to explore working solutions for the future. Similar to climate-resilient and biodiverse landscapes, healthy and thriving riparian habitats are a central factor to the health of people and nature across Colorado.

The private land conservation movement is well positioned to lean into collaborative problem-solving and creative approaches that work with current conservation tools, while exploring new options to support landowners, communities and ecosystems and respecting Colorado's water law.

View a Case Study:
Colorado Open Lands,
Protecting Groundwater Aquifers

Resilient Agriculture:

Safeguard a scale of working agricultural lands necessary to support thriving landscapes and economies

OVERVIEW

Agriculture is critical to Colorado and includes 38,900 farms and ranches on nearly 32 million privately owned acres across the state. While essential to our economy and our state's agricultural legacy, these iconic landscapes also provide immense health and ecological benefits to people and nature. Ranch and range lands support critical wildlife habitat and riparian areas – and contribute to healthy ecosystems, which in turn provide clean air and drinking water for all. Much of Colorado's conservation success is due to the dedication of working landowners and the protection of working lands. Ongoing and increased protection of these landscapes is vital to advancing conservation goals over the next decade.

Goal 1. Increase conservation of viable farmland and rangeland to sustain Colorado's agricultural economy.

Goal 2. Expand opportunities and incentives that support landowners' ability to cultivate long-term landscape and economic resiliency.

Goal 3. Increase equitable land access and ownership opportunities to support farm and rangeland viability through both new farmers and ranchers and the next generation of producers.



James Ranch | La Plata Open Space Conservancy

Strategies for Action

- Expand funding and incentives, such as the Colorado conservation easement tax credit, to meet existing landowner demand.
 - Encourage coalition member organizations to directly engage landowners in identifying challenges and opportunities to support landowners' conservation, restoration and stewardship goals.
 - Elevate to new and existing funders the importance of financial resources landowners need to build landscape and economic resiliency. Examples include improving and expanding existing programs, such as those offered by Natural Resources Conservation Service, or working with the State of Colorado and other partners to develop new programming, incentives and funding.
 - Collaborate with agricultural groups to develop tools and programming that connect current with future producers and reduce the barriers to conservation among new farmers and ranchers.
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Colorado is one of the top agricultural states in the nation. Agriculture contributes \$47 billion annually to our state's economy, and employs more than 195,000 people. Further, Colorado annually exports approximately \$2 billion in agricultural products, giving people worldwide a taste of Colorado. From Colorado beef and the Palisade peach to Olathe sweet corn, Rocky Ford melons and the Pueblo chile, Colorado's farms and ranchlands provide healthy, local food.

Private landowners who grow this food are on the front lines of mitigating the impacts of climate change, providing secure local food systems, and conserving and stewarding these important lands today and for future generations.

As with other pillars, data can support an increase in conservation efforts on critical agricultural landscapes. Maps illustrating prime farmland soils (see Figure 4) and current agricultural landcover (see Figure 5) provide good information on cropland production. Maps showing irrigated acres are available through the Division of Water Resources' interactive mapping tool, which also allows users to see acres that are no longer irrigated.

With that said, there are also many non-irrigated farms and ranches across the state that are critical to community and ecological vitality. Protecting the multitude of diverse agricultural lands and operations across the state is important for a successful conservation future.

(See Figure 4 / Figure 5 next page)



Palisade Peach Farm | Malcolm Childers

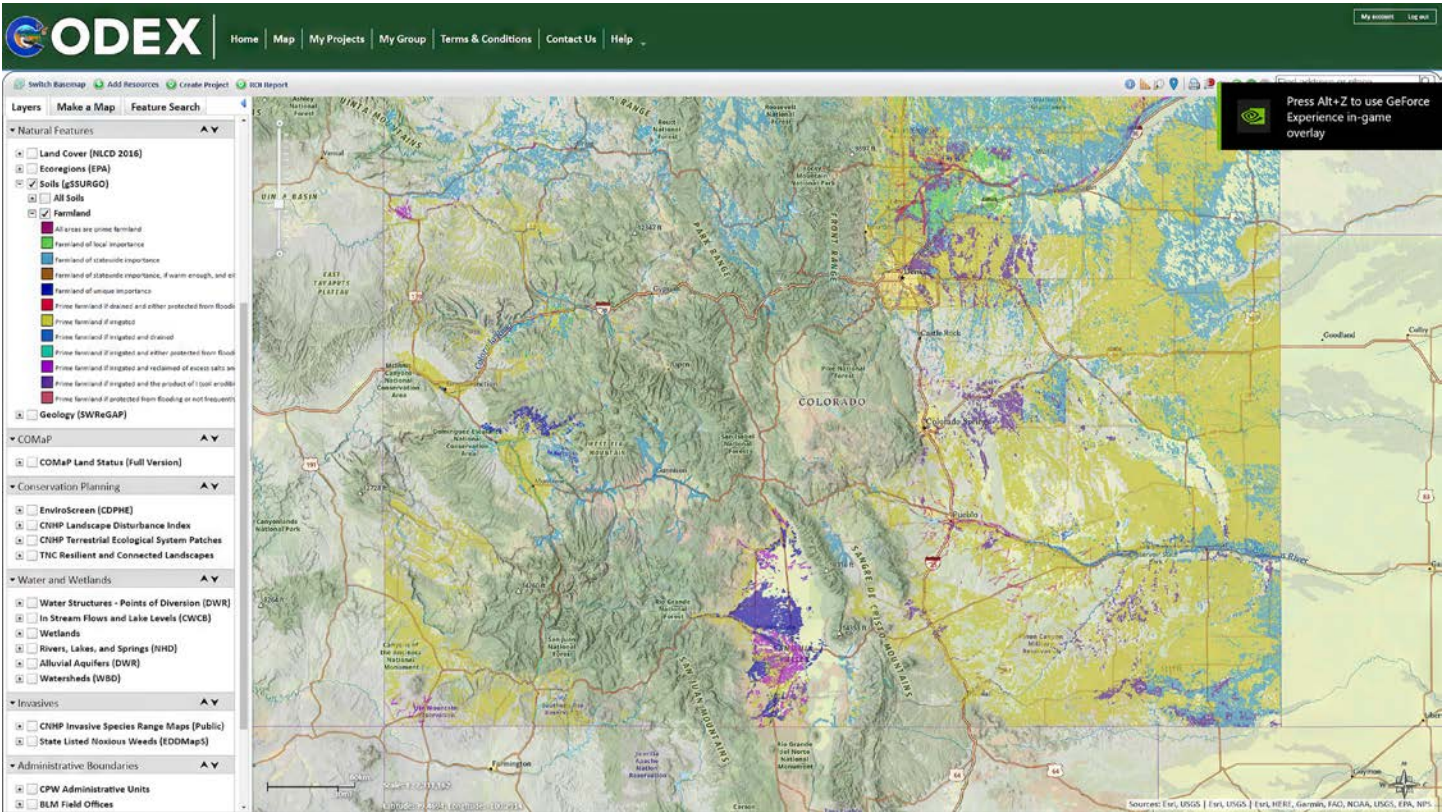


Figure 4 | Prime farmland soil map generated by CNHP, accessed from CODEX March 2023. Citation: Soil Survey Staff. The Gridded Soil Survey Geographic (gSSURGO) Database for Colorado. United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. Available online at gdg.sc.egov.usda.gov. 2019 Release.

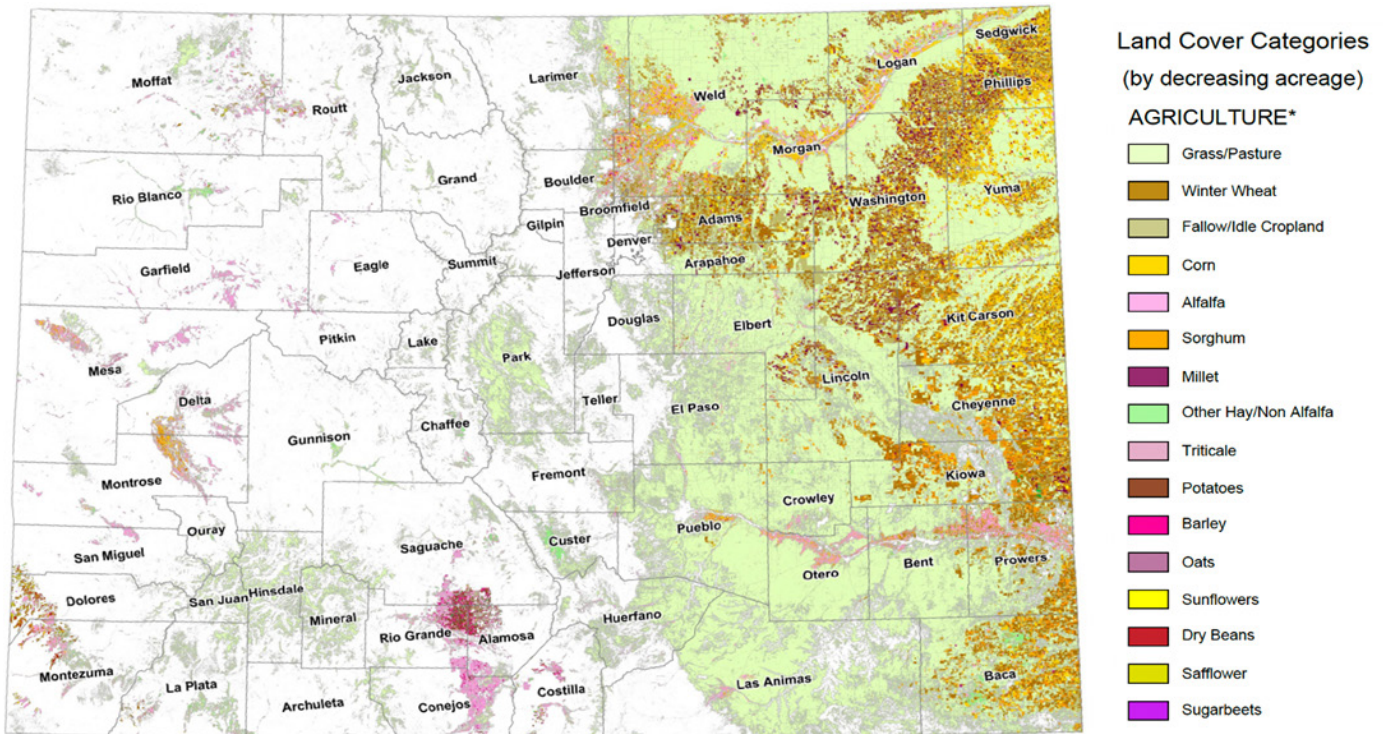


Figure 5 | Agricultural landcover map, produced June 2022. Data Source: CropScape.

View a Case Study:
Palmer Land Conservancy,
Bessemer Farmland Conservation Project

Lasting Conservation Movement:

Increase awareness and support for private land conservation to create a sustainable conservation sector that is responsive and relevant to Coloradans now and in the future.

OVERVIEW

Coloradans who are more aware of the benefits of conservation are more likely to advocate, act and vote with their values to support conservation. This pillar features opportunities to increase awareness and understanding about the importance of land conservation, expand resources for on-the-ground work, and increase support for community-focused initiatives.

Goal 1. Increase awareness of the important role private land conservation plays in people’s everyday lives.

Goal 2. Increase and develop more policies, incentives and funding sources that support private land conservation and long-term land and conservation easement stewardship.

Goal 3. Secure new funding partners and resources to fill funding gaps for expanded conservation work.



Strategies for Action

- Work with communications and marketing experts in conservation to develop and implement a coordinated campaign that raises awareness and highlights the relevancy of private land conservation among new and expanded audiences.
 - Advocate to increase the Colorado conservation easement tax credit cap to adequately meet the demand for the program.
 - Advocate to expand financial incentives for landowners seeking to conserve their property through new funding sources, incentives and conservation programs, including the Farm Bill programs, local open space and conservation initiatives, and new conservation tools and incentives.
 - Identify new funding sources and models to create more capacity for conservation easement holders, cover the costs of transactions, support perpetual stewardship obligations and increase community-focused conservation initiatives.
-
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The goals of this pillar center on increasing the depth and breadth of support the conservation movement needs to succeed over the next decade and beyond. Increased capacity for land trusts and their partners to increase the pace of land conservation is critically important. Adding new funding models and incentives will enable private land conservation to be sustainable and viable for the long term. A stronger foundation of land trust resources is fundamentally necessary to achieve

View a Case Study:

Keep It Colorado, Innovative Funding Strategies Help Build Capacity and Advance Conservation

the aims of the other pillars in this roadmap, effectively align with other statewide plans, and advance the pace and scale of conservation.

Underpinning the call for increased support is a need to raise more awareness about the successes of land conservation to date, the opportunities for the future, and the beneficial impact conservation has on quality of life of all Coloradans.

It is important to note that **these goals toward a sustainable conservation sector build on the already impactful and innovative advocacy and funding initiatives available today.** Tools such as the conservation easement tax credit enable landowners across the state to achieve their conservation goals —goals that simultaneously benefit the public. Support from the Colorado Legislature has allowed that incentive to more adequately compete with other financial incentives that would otherwise result in those lands being developed or converted to other uses. In the recent past, this program has seen a significant increase in demand from landowners who wish to voluntarily donate conservation easements – presenting a timely and unique opportunity to increase investments in these landscapes now for protection that will last forever.

Programs that offer **transaction cost assistance** to landowners who face financial barriers to conservation are also in high demand. Increasing support for landowners and exploring new incentives for conservation, stewardship and restoration can build on existing programs and expand the pace and scale of conservation.

Finally, as land trusts evolve their operations to meet changing needs in communities and on the ground, they need new resources to support organizational shifts, explore new programming and engage new audiences. Evolving the work of the private land conservation movement is vitally important to the long-term sustainability of the sector, the communities conservation organizations serve, and the landscapes they steward.

View a Case Study:

Douglas Land Conservancy and Douglas County Open Space, A Guided Hike Partnership



Metrics for Success: Doubling Down for the Future

Achieving the vision for a sustainable and lasting conservation movement requires bold, ambitious and achievable targets. With a growing urgency – and demand – for increased conservation efforts, now is the time to *double down* on the support for the work ahead. The private land conservation community has the expertise, the experience and the commitment to do that.

With an **infusion of the appropriate support and resources**, it can achieve its vision and goals over the next decade:

Double the amount of acreage of protected lands.

- Colorado needs to protect at least an additional 3.3 million acres of habitat, climate-resilient landscapes, working farms and ranches, open spaces and parks in order to protect enough land to ensure minimum viable habitat and agricultural corridors and provide adequate land for people and nature. In effect, this means doubling the acreage that is currently protected. This represents 20% of the remaining unconserved land mapped as Resilient and Connected Lands, which are vital to the long-term sustainability of Colorado.
- Current projections, using current tools and funding structures, amount to 1 million acres conserved over the next decade. To achieve this ambitious goal, the rest of the roadmap must also be accomplished, including increased funding and policies to advance the work.

Double the engagement in conservation.

- Expanding the number and diversity of people engaged with conservation organizations will result in projects that continue to be locally driven and community-centered. With an increase in engagement, the conservation movement will have the support it needs to stay responsive and relevant for generations to come.

Double the resources for conservation.

- An increased pace and scale of land protection is not possible without an increase in funding. Colorado's tax credit program has proven widely successful in incentivizing voluntary private land conservation for the public benefit, but the demand is growing. The tax credit cap needs to be increased to meet that demand.
- Additionally, new funding partners, models and incentives must be developed to allow conservation to remain a competitive and viable option for landowners and communities.
- Increased and reliable funding sources are also needed to support perpetual stewardship of conserved lands and organizational support for the land trusts and other conservation organizations charged with upholding these perpetual conservation and stewardship obligations.

Tracking progress:

The metrics will require active tracking and data-gathering to determine baselines for evaluating progress. Keep It Colorado is well poised to continue working with its land trust and public agency members and partners at CNHP and the Division of Conservation to collect initial data and coordinate with funding partners to support ongoing reporting.



Implementation

Implementation requires a variety of approaches, just like the ongoing work of the diverse conservation organizations across the state. Keep It Colorado is poised to support state-level implementation of goals and provide the convening structure for conservation organizations to share ideas, collaborate on solutions and track progress. Colorado's land trust and public agencies will continue to be central to engaging landowners and communities and delivering conservation outcomes.

Something for Everyone

The roadmap is designed to allow individual organizations to build on their current successes and bring their mission-driven work to the forefront in service of the larger vision. These different approaches to conservation will foster a multifaceted implementation of the roadmap. This will allow organizations the ability to lean into specific goals that align with their current and future work for a cumulative impact and progress on the plan. Consequently, not every organization will work with all of the goals and strategies presented here.

An Adaptive Path Forward

As conservation evolves, the roadmap must also evolve and adapt to support ongoing work and respond to new opportunities and unanticipated challenges. The goals, strategies and metrics may need to evolve over time to ensure the roadmap is effective over the next decade. **Exact implementation processes will be driven by the conservation community and supported by Keep It Colorado, and may include:**

- Workshops, summits and meetings to foster collaborative problem-solving, priority-setting and idea-sharing across the conservation sector.
- Relationship-building with new populations, audiences and underrepresented groups.
- Annual data collection and sharing to track progress, evaluate goals and strategies, and adapt the roadmap accordingly.
- Elevating the roadmap in broader planning initiatives as a critical element of conservation solutions for the state. This includes the *Colorado Water Plan*, *State Wildlife Action Plan*, *Central Grasslands Roadmap* and the forthcoming *Statewide Recreation, Conservation, and Climate Resilience Plan*.

Partners in Progress

Implementation of the roadmap also requires support from partners, funders and policy makers. The goals in this roadmap call for ambitious action that can lead to the transformational change needed to secure a more sustainable Colorado future. For the conservation sector to be successful in its work, more robust and innovative funding, incentives and tools need to be developed. Policies that support these tools and structures for effective conservation are also necessary. And an increase in the number of people engaging with conservation organizations and conservation work in their own communities is also vital to a lasting and relevant conservation movement.



Grass Valley | George Hendrix



The Big Picture – A Call to Action

The Conservation Sector Cannot Do This Work Alone

Colorado must prioritize and invest in the conditions that will enable more conservation – including adding more capacity and infrastructure to the conservation workforce, developing new and refined conservation tools, and providing additional and more robust funding streams.

This roadmap elevates those needs and creates a framework to guide the conservation sector in taking its work to a new level.

At the same time, this roadmap represents only a fraction of the work that must be accomplished to tackle major challenges facing Colorado. There are other, external forces the private land conservation community cannot control.

For example, to effectively confront the climate crisis, a transformational level of change will be needed. Science shows that Colorado is likely to experience even more extreme drought, wildfires, heat waves, floods, mudslides, and severe water quality challenges, paired with the cumulative everyday impacts of climate change. A proactive approach to protect Colorado against these threats and mitigate the inevitable, negative impacts includes increasing the pace and scale of conservation efforts. This is where the private land conservation community can play an essential and influential role. Forward momentum will require that the sector carefully and thoughtfully strategize, coordinate, and secure sufficient funding for conservation efforts and natural solutions to climate change.

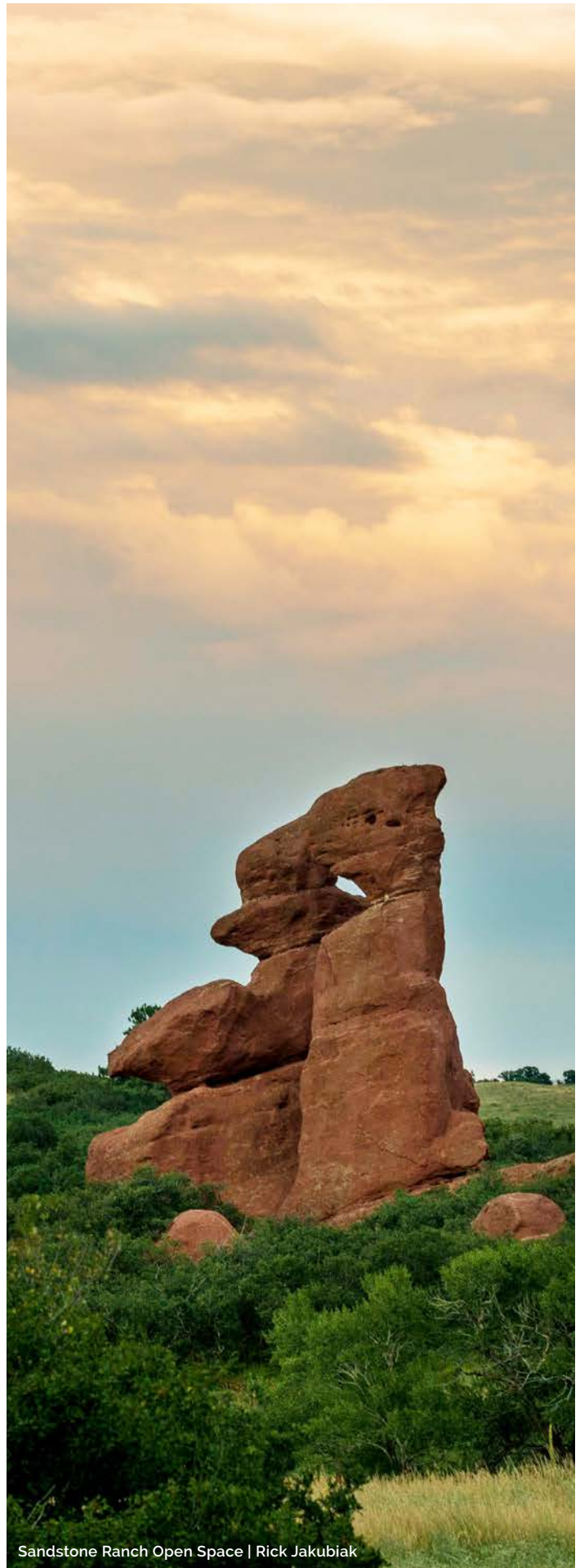
It will also require the community to authentically engage more Coloradans. Now more than ever, there is an immense opportunity to involve diverse voices in planning for a future that prioritizes

conservation. By building greater understanding of local communities and their priorities, developing authentic partnerships and thoughtfully collaborating, we can increase our collective expertise and thought leadership and tackle the challenges of climate change and protect the aspects of Colorado we all value.

The private land conservation community is a vital piece of the puzzle, and this sector will do its part; but it is still only a piece. This roadmap calls for action from all who have influence in protecting Colorado – including funders, elected officials, legislators, voters, and nonprofit and government leaders.

Extensive coordination among Colorado's land trusts, open space agencies, landowners, funders, decision-makers and Keep It Colorado will be needed to achieve landscape-scale conservation and sustain Colorado's people and places – and it is this level of coordination that is inspiring. Coming together to create a collective vision, strategy and set of goals, these participants have already laid an important foundation.

Join us in achieving this vision for the future of conservation in Colorado.



Sandstone Ranch Open Space | Rick Jakubiak



APPENDICES

- A. Case Studies – The Plan in Action
- B. Shared Terminology and Principles
- C. Planning Methodologies
- D. Collaborative Priorities
- E. Aligning This Plan in Colorado
- F. References and Resources
- G. Data Sources
- H. Board of Directors and Advisory Council





APPENDIX A: Case Studies - The Plan in Action

Case Study: Eagle Valley Land Trust, Creating a Sanctuary for Wildlife and Their Habitat

In central Colorado lies a property that is the former site of Taylor city. Once home to 200 people, the town was abandoned in 1911. By the time Marjorie Westermann moved there in 1978, there were only a few remnants left, including the town dump, from which Marjorie scavenged her first plate and fork.

Marjorie's property, fully off the grid, is nestled between Red Cliff and Leadville on Tennessee Pass. The breathtaking views drew her there. But after two decades of living in Colorado's high country, Marjorie became aware of the harm that development, a booming population and climate change could have on the environment. In 2001 she partnered with Eagle Valley Land Trust to write a conservation easement that would protect her 67-acre property and the delicate ecosystem and biodiverse habitat that make the area special.

The property is a mix of wetlands and forests. Taylor Creek runs through the south side, and a large meadow has grown where Taylor City once was. When she put the property under easement, 80% of the wetlands were thriving, but about five years later they started drying up. This posed a threat to the beaver population. Because beavers build natural fire breaks and create patches of wetland that restore groundwater, they can make landscapes more resistant to fire and drought.

Increasingly, warmer temperatures and changing climate conditions have also reduced the area's bird populations. Creating a sanctuary for them was one of her goals.

Project Impacts

Marjorie has worked with groups such as Wildlife 2000 to foster healthy ecosystems for the variety of animals that call the area home. Together, they successfully reintroduced the beavers, which restored the wetlands; now the wetlands are moist, the ponds are thriving, and there is a healthy beaver population.

The property includes signs of other abundant wildlife including coyotes, moose, fox, deer, elk and mountain lions. It is also known as a birding hotspot for a variety of species including finches and hummingbirds. Plant life abounds; Marjorie recently identified 61 wildflower species in three hours.

Marjorie's extensive fire mitigation work, including chipping trees that have been killed by beetles and cutting wood, has contributed to responsible forest management practices and fire protection efforts not only for her property but those of her neighbors.



Plan in Action

This pillar of Conserving Colorado highlights the importance of private lands conservation to healthy and resilient ecosystems. Wetlands are among the habitats most at risk. Since Colorado was first settled, over half of its wetlands have vanished. Wetlands and waterbodies occupy less than 3% of the landscape, but wetlands support up to 80% of all wildlife species at some point in their lives, and host more at-risk wildlife species than any other habitat. According to CNHP, many wetland-dependent wildlife species are under-conserved and vulnerable to habitat loss and population decline.

Private landowners of large and small properties have a critical role to play in helping to manage wetlands, forests, shortgrass prairie and other habitat. For landowners whose properties abut adjacent conserved or public properties, the opportunity to connect and protect larger swaths of contiguous areas is significant. Conservation

enables the broad proliferation of habitat wildlife need for foraging, nesting, breeding and moving. And it makes these lands more resilient to threats such as drought, higher temperatures and wildfire.

Many landowners, including Marjorie, view this extensive work as necessary to combat human contributions to the changing climate and ensure that Colorado's prolific wildlife and abundant beauty will continue. Marjorie feels a responsibility. **"We have saddened mother earth down to the core. I'm just doing my little bit to save what I can,"** she says.



Cordilleran Flycatcher | Steve Sunday

APPENDIX A: Case Studies - The Plan in Action

Case Study: Montezuma Land Conservancy, Working to Redefine Conservation

Since 2017, Montezuma Land Conservancy (MLC) has been entrenched in deepening the organization's commitment to community centered and informed conservation in the southwest. Much of MLC's evolution as a land trust has been driven by an emphasis on the organization's justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (DEIJ) journey and two community values assessments completed in both 2018 and again in 2021.

The outcomes of both the community input and organizational DEIJ efforts have been woven throughout MLC's community engagement programming and conservation work. While MLC has continued to carry out its K-12 programming at Fozzie's Farm, there has been an increased focus on paid high-school internships and the summer Agricultural Immersion Program. These programs have been further complemented by MLC's most recent efforts to build deeper relationships with the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, which began in 2021.

Project Impacts

MLC has seen profound impacts and outcomes from its community conservation programs and partnerships. While these programs do not necessarily extend into transactional conservation projects, they remain a critical part of making the outdoors and conservation available to more diverse populations in the community. They are at the center of building long-lasting conservation ethics and love of land that is needed to advance conservation. Whether building job skills, leadership or self-confidence in youth through programs on the land, or addressing historical inequities in the conservation space through engaging the Tribe, outcomes of this work all lead to a richer understanding of, and connection to, one another and relationships with the natural world.

The Plan in Action

This pillar of Conserving Colorado illustrates ways in which conservation can and should engage diverse community voices and deliver services and benefits in a more equitable and inclusive way. Organizations like MLC have the opportunity to extend their work beyond traditional private lands conservation boundaries and think more broadly about how to authentically engage communities in connecting to private lands conservation. MLC has learned that this work means expanding our own definitions of what a land trust can be within a community, and better understanding how our tools and expertise can complement and address relevant community needs. Not all organizations will be able to expand their mission in this way, but MLC sets an example for how to approach this opportunity successfully.



Fozzie's Farm | Montezuma Land Conservancy

APPENDIX A: Case Studies - The Plan in Action

Case Study: Palmer Land Conservancy, Bessemer Farmland Conservation Project

In the face of rapid population growth, climate variability, and water scarcity, communities across the West are facing unprecedented challenges to balance competing water needs. As a headwaters state responsible for supplying water to nearly six million Coloradans, nineteen states, and Mexico, Colorado is at the epicenter of these tensions – and the Arkansas River in southeastern Colorado is no exception.

In 2009, to secure the water future for its growing community, the Pueblo Board of Water Works (Pueblo Water) acquired nearly a third of the Bessemer Ditch water rights – water that irrigates some of the best farmland in the state and American West. Designated as Farmlands of National Importance, these critical farms produce

healthy, local food including Pueblo chiles, corn, melons, onions, tomatoes, beans, and more. Pueblo Water currently leases back the water to farmers, but the transfer of these water rights from agricultural to municipal use is inevitable. A large-scale dry-up on the Bessemer Ditch would have devastating and far-reaching effects on the local community, economy, and land.

Recognizing these risks, in 2015 Palmer Land Conservancy began working with landowners, the community, and Pueblo Water to retain a critical mass of the best irrigated farmland in the region. Coined the Bessemer Farmland Conservation Project, this community-driven effort is a long-term initiative that will deliver strategic, innovative, collaborative, and permanent conservation and water outcomes resulting in win-win-win solutions for all.



Bessemer Ditch | Russell Schnitzer

Project Impacts

To date, on this multi-decade project, there have been significant accomplishments and impact:

1. **Water court decree:** Under Palmer Land Conservancy's leadership, the decree changing the water rights from agricultural to municipal use established a first-of-its-kind water substitution allowance, providing for the strategic and voluntary dry-up of less productive farms, alongside the continued irrigation of more productive farms. This precedent-setting decree inclusion gives farmers and the community a path for ensuring the future of agriculture in Pueblo County.

2. **Economic Impact Analysis:** In 2020, Palmer Land Conservancy commissioned a cutting-edge Economic Impact Analysis that shows the economic loss that drying up farmland would have to Pueblo County's economy. The report makes a strong, data-driven case for maintaining the most productive farmland and offers solutions that allow for municipal expansion (and the necessary dry-up of farmland), but not at the expense of the agricultural sector and its positive economic ripple effects.

3. **Decision Support System:** In partnership with Freshwater Trust, a science-driven Decision Support System tool was developed that provides scenario-based analysis to assist elected officials and community decision-makers to better understand the impacts of farmland dry-up.

Plan in Action

This pillar of *Conserving Colorado* highlights the importance of private lands conservation to healthy and resilient communities. However, significant swaths of agricultural lands have been lost to buy-and-dry practices across the state. The importance of these lands to our health and wellbeing cannot be overstated. They provide secure, local food to Coloradans, and are the economic lifeblood of rural communities. Agricultural lands enhance ecosystems, support biodiversity and provide clean water, wildlife habitat, and open space and views that are the backdrop to our daily lives.

Farm and ranchland protection is critical to ensuring healthy and resilient communities across Colorado, and innovative projects like the Bessemer Farmland Conservation Initiative are a blueprint for **collaborative action in Colorado** and beyond. What started as a small, grassroots community initiative has amassed into a nationally recognized historic water conservation project. This project will not only help to safeguard Pueblo County's agricultural, economic and ecological future, but will serve as a replicable model for other water-starved regions in the West.



Pueblo Produce | Russell Schnitzer

APPENDIX A: Case Studies - The Plan in Action

Case Study: Keep It Colorado, Innovative Funding Strategies Help Build Capacity and Advance Conservation

The costs associated with conservation easement transactions are prohibitively high for many landowners who wish to conserve their properties. In late 2020, half of Colorado land trusts reported that conservation easement transaction costs – for example, for appraisals, baseline documentation and surveys – exceed \$60,000. On average, landowners pay \$50,000 per transaction. As nonprofits, land trusts are often not able to provide landowners with the needed financial support.

In response, Keep It Colorado partnered with Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) to establish the Transaction Cost Assistance Program (TCAP). TCAP regrants funds to land trusts to help enable landowners who have opportunities to conserve their properties, but who face financial barriers, to conserve more land more quickly. With this assistance, Keep It Colorado eases the financial burden for landowners and enables them to protect critical landscapes that are imminent risk of being sold, subdivided or converted to other uses.

Keep It Colorado's pilot was so successful that GOCO again invested in TCAP in 2022.

Project Impacts

- In 2021, Keep It Colorado awarded \$516,915 in grants to support 14 projects. This resulted in the conservation of 5,600 acres of land and leveraged more than \$8.3 million in tax credits through the state's conservation easement tax credit program.
- In 2022, Keep It Colorado announced \$412,000 in funds to disburse over two grant cycles. The two cycles elicited \$1,141,986 in requests – far surpassing the available funds, and demonstrating a significant demand for assistance.
- Funded conservation projects represent a diverse cross-section of the state and have resulted in the protection of critical habitat, local food systems, iconic viewsheds, wetland and river corridors, and places of historic and cultural significance.
- Assistance has been game-changing for some conservation-minded landowners who simply would not have been able to move forward without it.



Ruybal Fox Creek Ranch | Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust

Plan in Action

This pillar of *Conserving Colorado* highlights community capacity and sustainability. Land trusts and their partners have identified limited funding as a significant barrier to advancing conservation, and TCAP is a proven and innovative funding strategy to help address the need.

Keep It Colorado's program creates an accessible pool of funding and a process to select the projects with the greatest urgency and conservation outcomes. This supports more land trusts and landowners across the state. It better leverages more of the conservation easement tax credit. And it creates a more efficient, streamlined funding approach that alleviates the administrative burden on mission-driven funders like GOCO.

Keep It Colorado will continue to explore similarly creative strategies to support more conservation and enable more families to protect the lands and waters that define our state.



Josie and Lucinda Ruybal

“They’re not making any more land. We need to do what we can to protect it.”

Josie Ruybal Abeyta

Spotlight: Ruybal Fox Creek Ranch

Josie Ruybal Abeyta is a landowner in Colorado's San Luis Valley. A TCAP grant to her local land trust, the Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust (RiGHT), helped Josie move forward in her decision to permanently protect the ranch her family lived on and worked for four generations.

In the San Luis Valley, where more than 50% of the population is Hispanic, conserving Josie's family's 800-acre ranch was not only a chance to keep her special childhood place intact and provide natural areas for the wildlife that pass through there. It also helps to sustain a much larger cultural and environmental landscape that defines southern Colorado. Josie was driven: “They’re not making any more land. We need to do what we can to protect it,” she said.

When Josie sought help from RiGHT, it was a chance for the land trust to protect this unique piece of land, and build more relationships and trust with a community that is often overlooked in the conservation arena.

Read the complete story: [Ruybal Fox Creek Ranch: Preserving a Cultural and Environmental Legacy](#).

APPENDIX A: Case Studies - The Plan in Action

Case Study: Douglas Land Conservancy and Douglas County Open Space, A Guided Hike Partnership

Douglas Land Conservancy was formed in 1987 through a citizen initiative in response to alarming regional growth rates that far outpaced the rest of the country. Today, it conserves lands in Douglas, Elbert and Jefferson Counties and relies heavily on partnerships with its governmental partner, Douglas County Open Space. The strong and long-standing relationship between the conservancy and the county has not only resulted in the protection of thousands of acres of land; it has also enabled the two organizations to significantly engage the people who live, work and play in the region. Their joint efforts to involve local community members has been a recipe for success in conservation efforts.

Douglas Land Conservancy nurtures a base of 140 volunteers, approximately half of whom also volunteer with the county. These very active community members not only feel passionate about local conservation efforts; they are also knowledgeable about the region's trails and open spaces, and are active in protecting and improving those places.

The conservancy and the county also work together to offer educational guided hikes on many of the area's public open spaces and private properties. Hikes on private lands are a special way for community members to recreate in areas that have limited access – while learning about the unique natural assets that are part of their local landscape. True and Bald Mountains are two examples of lands that are privately owned. The voluntary conservation easement allows the county to take groups out on this space to hike four times annually. A favorite time of year is during the fall, when hikers can witness the change of seasons in the wooded areas, while taking in the beautiful

views of southern Douglas County and areas of geological interest.

The Douglas County community has showed its support and enthusiasm for conservation at the ballot box, as well. Initiative 100 passed in November 1994, imposing a .17% county sales-and-use tax for purchasing parks, open space and trails. Many of the open spaces in Douglas County that have been expanded thanks to the tax are owned by the county and protected in perpetuity through a conservation easement that Douglas Land Conservancy holds. The most recent example of this is Sandstone Ranch, a Douglas County gem that boasts spectacular views, expansive hay meadows, red rock formations, wildlife habitat, historic ranching operation, and 3.5 miles of common boundary with Pike National Forest.



Bald Mountain | Ken Walker

Project Impacts

Each year, hundreds of community members access properties like True and Bald Mountains.

- Educational events such as guided hikes help local community members become more informed about their environment and the region's geology, agricultural history, and flora and fauna.
- Public events give the conservancy the opportunity to stress the importance of private/public partnerships in local conservation.
- Local open space sales tax revenues help ensure that the beauty of this region stays protected and intact.

Plan in Action

This pillar of *Conserving Colorado* emphasizes the importance of reaching out to and engaging Coloradans to highlight the benefits of private lands conservation and ultimately move people to advocate for it. By directly engaging local community members, the private lands conservation community and partners demonstrate proper land stewardship practices, teach the community about the value of perpetual easements, and support the conservation value of public recreation. Getting individuals onto conserved lands to experience the beauty and value of these special places inspires them to support efforts to set lands aside for wildlife, future generations and our own peaceful existence. Coloradans can advocate for the protection of these special places in many ways – from donating their time and money to conservation organizations, to voting.



Bald Mountain | Ken Walker

APPENDIX A: Case Studies - The Plan in Action

Case Study: Colorado Open Lands, Protecting Groundwater Aquifers

Colorado's San Luis Valley (SLV) is known for its rich agricultural soils and farming and ranching activities. However, a hotter, drier climate and ongoing water shortages have taken a toll on the region – affecting food production and way of life, as well as raising questions about the future agricultural viability of these lands. In the SLV, the aquifers (underground water sources) fed by snowpack, the Rio Grande and the river's tributaries are being depleted to the point that land trusts, water conservation districts, and farmers and ranchers have been exploring creative solutions to help ensure the region's water sustainability.

The SLV is faced with the hard reality of needing to retire upwards of 50,000 acres of agricultural land from irrigated production in order to recover the aquifers. Determining how to incentivize farmers and ranchers to reduce their groundwater consumption or retire their wells has been a creative process. Enter the concept of a groundwater conservation easement – an arrangement whereby a landowner can be compensated for permanently restricting the use of groundwater on a property. That's what landowners Ron and Gail Bowman in the SLV have opted to do, and they sought help from Colorado Open Lands to make it happen.

Located in Saguache County in the northeastern section of the SLV, the Bowmans' 150-year-old Peachwood Farms is a roughly 1900-acre farm with 12 crop circles. Of those, the Bowmans have voluntarily retired their water rights on seven – meaning they won't pump water from the aquifer for irrigation, instead leaving that water in the aquifer. The remaining five crop circles will experience water reductions of 50%. The water that remains available for use will not be used for agricultural production; instead, the groundwater subdistrict will put it into San Luis Creek to mitigate impacts of continued pumping by other area farms.

Without heirs to farm the land after they are gone, the Bowmans determined that drying up their farm for the community's benefit was the right strategy.

In an *Alamosa Citizen* article, titled, "Groundwater conservation easement: A new way to manage Rio Grande," Ron Bowman was quoted as saying, "If by discontinuing irrigation on my farm, it means that my neighbors may be able to keep their multigenerational farms in their families, then it feels like the right thing to do." The Rio Grande Water Conservation District's Subdistrict 4 will purchase the farm in 2023.

The Peachwood Farms groundwater conservation easement is likely the first easement of its kind in the country, and could serve as a model for other regions experiencing declining aquifers.



Landowner Ron Bowman | Colorado Open Lands

Project Impacts

- Total water savings to the aquifer via the reduction in pumping amounts to about 1,700 acre-feet per year.
- Peachwood Farms is hydrologically connected to San Luis Creek, which flows into the Baca National Wildlife, supporting wetlands and key habitat. The groundwater →-pumping reductions on Peachwood Farms will help in the recovery of the confined aquifer and, in turn, help support resilient habitat communities on significant wildlife lands to the south.
- Other farms in the region increase their sustainability due to the large volume of water the Bowmans are leaving in the aquifer.
- Rio Grande Water Conservation District's Subdistrict 4 can achieve Colorado's sustainability requirements for the confined aquifer as well as offset stream depletions to San Luis Creek from groundwater pumping in Subdistricts 4 and 5.
- Other farmers have a new way to think about their operations as they continue to reduce the amount of water they use. And they have a new tool to consider using to generate some income in exchange for using less water and decreasing their agricultural production.

Sarah Parmar, director of conservation at Colorado Open Lands, said in the *Alamosa Citizen* article,

“By drying this particular farm, we are ensuring that the other farms in the subdistrict are sustainable and we ensure that this groundwater stays in the aquifer and out of the hands of anyone who might want to try to move it outside of the basin.”

Plan in Action

This pillar of *Conserving Colorado* emphasizes the importance of creating more alignment between land and water conservation to support healthy rivers, sustainable landscapes, viable agriculture and thriving communities. The Peachwood Farms groundwater conservation easement helps achieve goal 2 of this pillar. By creating a flexible and new administrative use of water rights, it helps prevent depletions to the confined aquifer in the SLV, a critical task in light of ongoing and severe threats to water resources due to aridification, drought, climate change and water shortages. The project also aligns with goal 3 in that it purposefully prioritizes protection of the groundwater aquifers for the benefit of the greater SLV community and the critical habitats and ecosystems that rely on these water resources



Peachwood Farms | Colorado Open Lands



APPENDIX B: Shared Terminology and Principles

Authentic Engagement: Working with communities, not for them or on their behalf, with genuine intent to build connection, open doors and learn.

Combined Impact: The collective efforts of organizations and partners to achieve a shared priority, whether independently or in collaboration.

Community Conservation or Community-centered Conservation: Conservation that addresses community needs or is implemented or led with, by or for a community. Land trusts define community conservation in myriad ways and offer different levels of programming to directly involve their local community members.

Community Programs: Programs designed with a specific community's interests in mind; e.g. nature-focused educational workshops for people who live in a community, or soil health workshops for landowners.

Ecosystem Services: The many life-sustaining benefits the natural environment and healthy ecosystems provide, such as clean and abundant water, clean air, species habitat, fertile soil for crop production, pollination and flood control.

Inventory of Natural Capital Assets: A summary of Colorado's stock of natural resources, such as geology, soils, air, water and all living organisms. Some natural capital assets provide people with free goods and services (ecosystem services).

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice: Diversity is how much the spaces we create reflect the different people of Colorado, as well as different human identities, experiences and perspectives. Equity is how much parity exists for people in terms of outcomes, access and opportunities. Inclusion is the act of creating a culture that is safe for different people, where people of all identities, abilities and perspectives feel welcome and are encouraged to contribute. Justice is the quality of being just or fair, and results from creating equitable circumstances and outcomes.

Marginalized, Underrepresented and Under-resourced Communities: Groups of people who have historically not been represented in or have been excluded from conservation efforts, or who continue to face barriers to getting involved or benefiting from conservation due to factors like race, ethnicity, wealth, and sexual orientation or identity.

Pace and Scale of Conservation: The amount of high-quality, thoughtful, strategic conservation in high-priority areas and connected landscapes that need urgent protection. Pace and scale may mean different things to different land trusts and other conservation organizations, especially those that focus less on the number of acres conserved and more on community conservation.

Private Land Conservation Community: Individuals and organizations committed to advancing conservation and protection of Colorado's significant privately owned lands, including nonprofit land trusts, local government open space programs, and regional, state and national conservation agencies. Because land and water are inextricably connected, private land conservation in the context of this roadmap should also consider waters that run through or are part of those lands.

Public Engagement: Communicating with, inviting and involving members of the public in programs, initiatives, events and conversations.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK): The evolving knowledge about a specific location, acquired by Indigenous peoples over thousands of years through direct contact with the environment. Includes relationships between plants, animals, natural phenomena, landscapes and timing of events that are used for hunting, fishing, trapping, agriculture and forestry.

Principles of Private Land Conservation

These principles helped guide the private land conservation community's development of this roadmap and can help guide its implementation. They offer continuity on how private land conservation work is accomplished, as well as help guide messaging and decision-making. Like the glossary terms, continuity improves public trust in private land conservation groups, actions and intended benefits.

Multifaceted Approach to Conservation

This roadmap elevates a broad perspective of conservation and strategies to:

- Conserve for nature, ensuring that wild places, land and water are healthy and can support a wide range of species.
- Conserve for people, as land and water are vital to the wellbeing and livelihoods of people. Conserving land and water for the benefit of people and communities ranges from protecting agricultural economies to supporting access to the outdoors, air quality and mental health support.
- Conserve for the field of conservation, as it is critical to protect and expand the capacity of organizations working to conserve land and water for nature and for people.

Combined Impact

This roadmap represents the continued and increased work by conservation groups to collaborate and strategically leverage their collective capacity and to demonstrate greater impact.

Voluntary Opportunity

This roadmap is built on goals to inspire trust, engage communities and encourage voluntary participation in private land conservation opportunities. It is not mandatory, statutory, required or a set of obligations.

Climate Benefits

This roadmap highlights needs and provides guidance for addressing climate change impacts through natural climate solutions and private land conservation, underscoring that climate change is an urgent global challenge, and the private lands community in Colorado can and must play a major role in addressing it.

Equitable Conservation

This roadmap aims to authentically, and more fully, engage diverse perspectives in the future of conservation, because private land conservation benefits all Coloradoans. The voices of some Coloradans, including Black, Indigenous, Latino, Asian and LGBTQ+ individuals, and women, people with disabilities, and youth have historically been underrepresented.

Relevant, Common Ground

This roadmap acknowledges that private land conservation is place-based. It reflects and addresses local issues and priorities, and at the same time may also reflect issues and priorities at the state and national level. Private land conservation is relevant to Colorado's many communities and voices because it supports the lives and livelihoods of Coloradans, and preserves shared community resources, including history, landscape, community identities, values and economics.

A Living Plan

This roadmap is a living document, because available data on all aspects of conservation are evolving and increasing. As Keep It Colorado and its members acquire new and improved sources of information, Keep It Colorado will update and refine this roadmap.



APPENDIX C: Planning Methodologies

Overview

Keep It Colorado contracted with Wellstone Collaborative Strategies (the facilitation team) in summer 2021 to conduct a multi-phase process to develop the plan. The facilitation team and Keep It Colorado engaged a core team and an advisory council to outline the overall planning process; determine shared conservation definitions and needs; and engage participants from across the state in a series of listening tours, a statewide forum and five geographically focused plan-development sessions. **Figure 6** below explains the four phases, which are further described below.

	Process	Planning Element	Definitions
1	Listening Tour Determine draft challenges and ideal state. Ideal state to be crafted into <i>Strategic Pillars</i>	Challenges Ideal State / Strategic Pillars	Challenges are what in the current state holds us back from achieving the ideal state or is an area of unmet need. Strategic Pillars are the ultimate outcomes the plan sets out to achieve and are expressed as the ideal state.
2	Statewide Forum Identify goals, confirm <i>Strategic Pillars</i> and challenges	Goals	Goals represent the result of our work to help reach the desired impact (<i>Strategic Pillar</i>).
3	Regional Planning Development Sessions Develop regional and statewide strategies & metrics	Metrics Strategies	Metrics are how we measure we've attained a goal at the regional level. These are measurable and time-bound. Strategies are the methods by which we attain a goal. These should start with an action verb.
4	Organizational Work Communicate & support plan implementation	Implementation	Implementation is how each organization or initiative will operationalize the plan through near-term tactics within their control.

Figure 6. Overview of the conservation planning process.

Geographic Scope and Regions

Representation in the Keep It Colorado coalition is divided into four geographic regions: Front Range, Southwest, Arkansas Basin and Northern-Central.

All land trusts, public agencies, conservation champions and partners belong to one or more of these four regions based on their service area. To ensure regional representation and priorities in this planning process, these Keep It Colorado regions were used to structure the listening tour and the plan development tour. Additionally, regional participants had the opportunity to join the statewide forum and participate in the overall planning process.

Phase 1. Listening Tour

To broaden the scope of the initial input from the core team and the advisory council, the facilitation team launched a “listening tour” in winter 2021. Overall, 101 Coloradans participated in the listening tour in one of two engagement types: virtual listening sessions, whose participants included land trusts and their current partners, and one-on-one interviews with people representing communities that are under-engaged in private land conservation. An additional 27 people who were unable to attend the listening sessions engaged with the facilitation team asynchronously.

Listening sessions: Using a digital interactive board, the facilitation team guided participants through a series of questions in full-group and breakout-team conversations, then conducted an analysis that helped the team to:

- Understand the current state of private land conservation.
- Consider what a future ideal state of private land conservation might look like.
- Identify strategic pillars to organize the plan.
- Capture emerging goals within these strategic pillars.
- Highlight opportunities to join or establish collaborative and/or ongoing efforts.
- Surface important resources that can support the plan.
- List current goals at the local or regional level.
- Understand challenges in meeting the goals.

Interviews with underrepresented groups:

Lacy Consulting Services of the facilitation team conducted interviews with 13 Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) Coloradans to gain a better understanding of their perception of conservation efforts in the state.

These one-on-one interviews held a larger focus on knowledge and barriers BIPOC individuals face in learning about and engaging with private land conservation. This space allowed for candid conversations about inclusion for all in the future of land conservation. Individuals who participated are directors, doctors, farmers, social workers, pastors, students and other people representing professions and trades across Colorado. The interview guide included background introductory questions about interviewees’ experiences within their community, positive and negative perceptions about private lands, knowledge of key statistics in Colorado land conservation, and perceptions about Colorado’s success on addressing key issues, such as population growth, scenic views and wildlife conservation.

Phase 2. Statewide Forum

The statewide forum in March 2022 marked a turning point in the planning process: from listening to development. It provided an opportunity for representatives from a diversity of organizations to connect, collaborate and strategize with colleagues from across the state and included several elements:

1. Share and hear about the listening tour, gain a more in-depth understanding of DEIJ, and hear outcomes from the interview discussions.
2. Pivot toward plan development and set the stage for determining needs, priorities, desired outcomes and emerging goals.
3. Hear updates about integrating CNHP’s CODEX and The Nature Conservancy’s RCN into the plan.

Phase 3. Plan Development Tour

During this phase, participants designed strategies at the regional and state levels to reach the goals determined during Phase 2. Two rounds of meetings were held to address all of the pillars, and several meetings with two ad-hoc committees were held to identify draft metrics and determine approaches to using maps. The plan development tour included objectives to create:

- Inclusive and regionally relevant meetings.
- Geographic priorities based on local knowledge together with CODEX and RCN.
- Key strategies needed to meet regional and state goals.
- Metric development to allow for tracking progress.
- Desired project attributes of future conservation projects.
- Relational and infrastructure capacity required to support implementation and lead to success.

Phase 4. Drafting the Plan

Drafting the plan required synthesizing and incorporating the extensive input and information shared throughout the previous phases.

Throughout the planning process and the drafting phase, participants had the opportunity to share their voice in determining what Colorado's first-ever conservation plan for private lands on a statewide level will look like; join conservation-minded and diverse individuals and organizations in shaping a collaborative plan that will help guide the sector in its land, water and wildlife protection efforts while serving as a resource for broader initiatives focused on water, outdoor recreation and wildlife; be part of an initiative that represents the economic, social and ecological interests and needs of local communities – including those that are often overlooked when it comes to conservation and strategic conservation planning; bring to life national and state goals to protect lands and waters by providing a set of concrete objectives, strategies and vision for conservation planning in Colorado; and “own” a conservation plan that will be implemented by the private land conservation community and that is built on buy-in and shared goals and values.



Heartland Ranch Nature Preserve | Keep It Colorado



APPENDIX D: Collaborative Priorities

During the plan development sessions, several maps were created to indicate priority areas of participants' current and future work and opportunity for conservation. These areas represent important conservation values and provide an important opportunity for conservation over the next decade but do not represent all of the important or critical work to be achieved.

Participants in the development phase identified an initial set of 29 potential opportunity landscapes. The resulting maps are starting points for future collaborative planning and will evolve as the private land conservation community incorporates additional voices and priorities in their work.

The maps in Figures 7-10 below represent areas the participants identified for the purposes of supporting various conservation outcomes. These participant-generated maps are snapshots from the discussions that identified opportunities for voluntary private land conservation. Each point represents a broad area and is a starting point for more local refinement and regional application.

- NW = Northwest
- SW = Southwest
- NE = Northeast
- SE = Southeast
- RG = Rio Grande Basin

Community-identified Potential Priority Areas: Ecosystem Resiliency

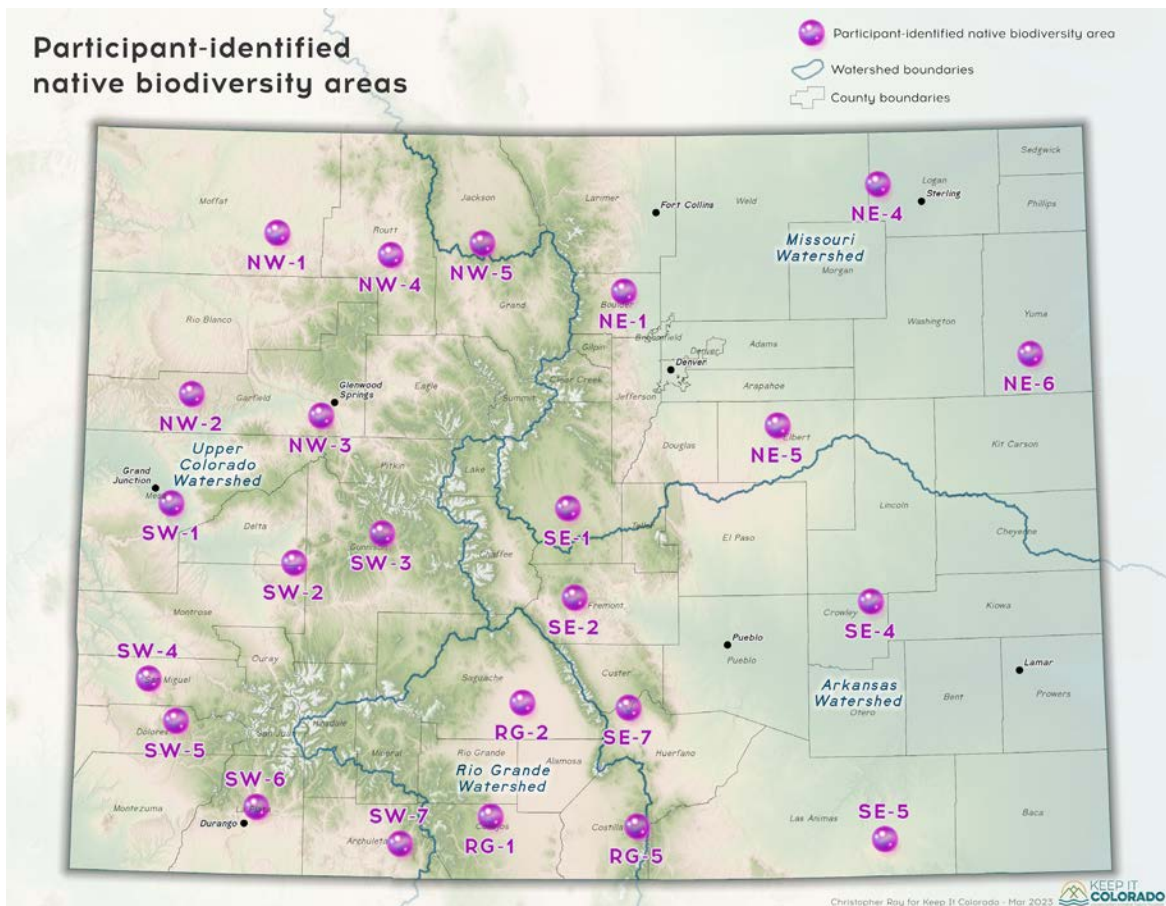


Figure 7 | This map represents the areas participants identified for the purposes of supporting resilient and connected lands and waters, ecosystems and native biodiversity.

Community-identified Potential Priority Areas: Community Resiliency

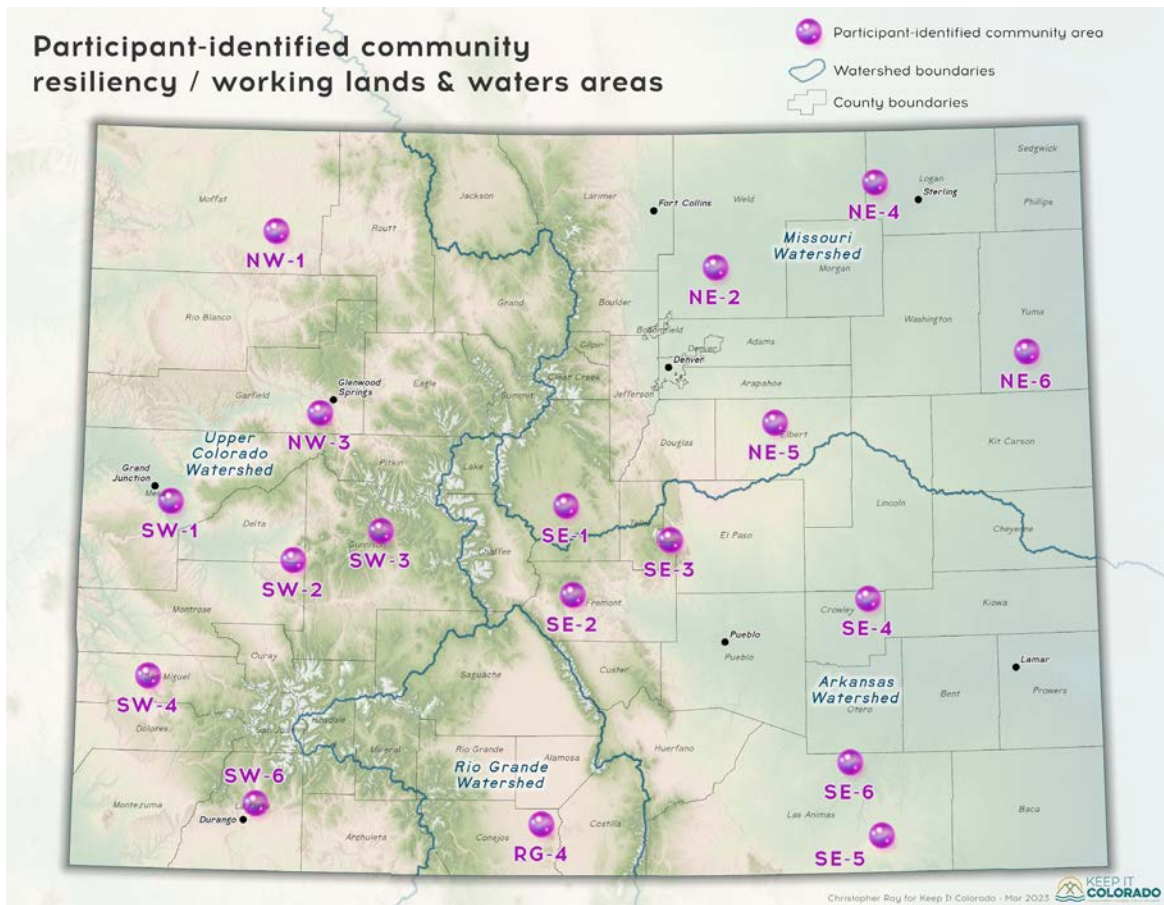


Figure 8 | This map represents the areas participants identified for the purposes of supporting working lands and associated waters and ecosystem services.



X Brand Ranch | Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust

Community-identified Potential Priority Areas: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice

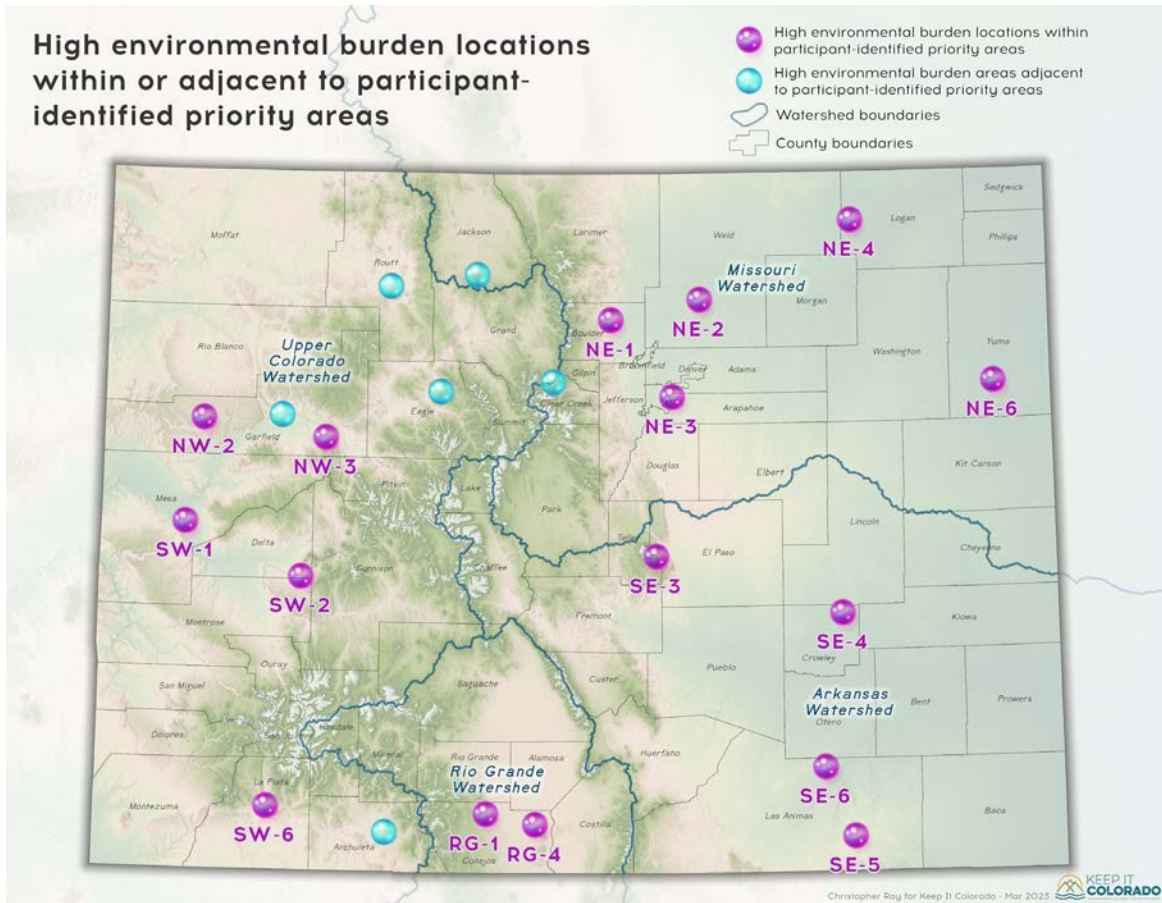


Figure 9 | This map represents the areas participants identified for the purposes of supporting diversity, equity, inclusion and justice. Each opportunity area includes a high climate-equity score or is adjacent to or partially overlapping an area with a high score. Higher scores denote a greater impact from environmental factors, such as pollution and changing climate.



Community-identified Potential Priority Areas: Summary

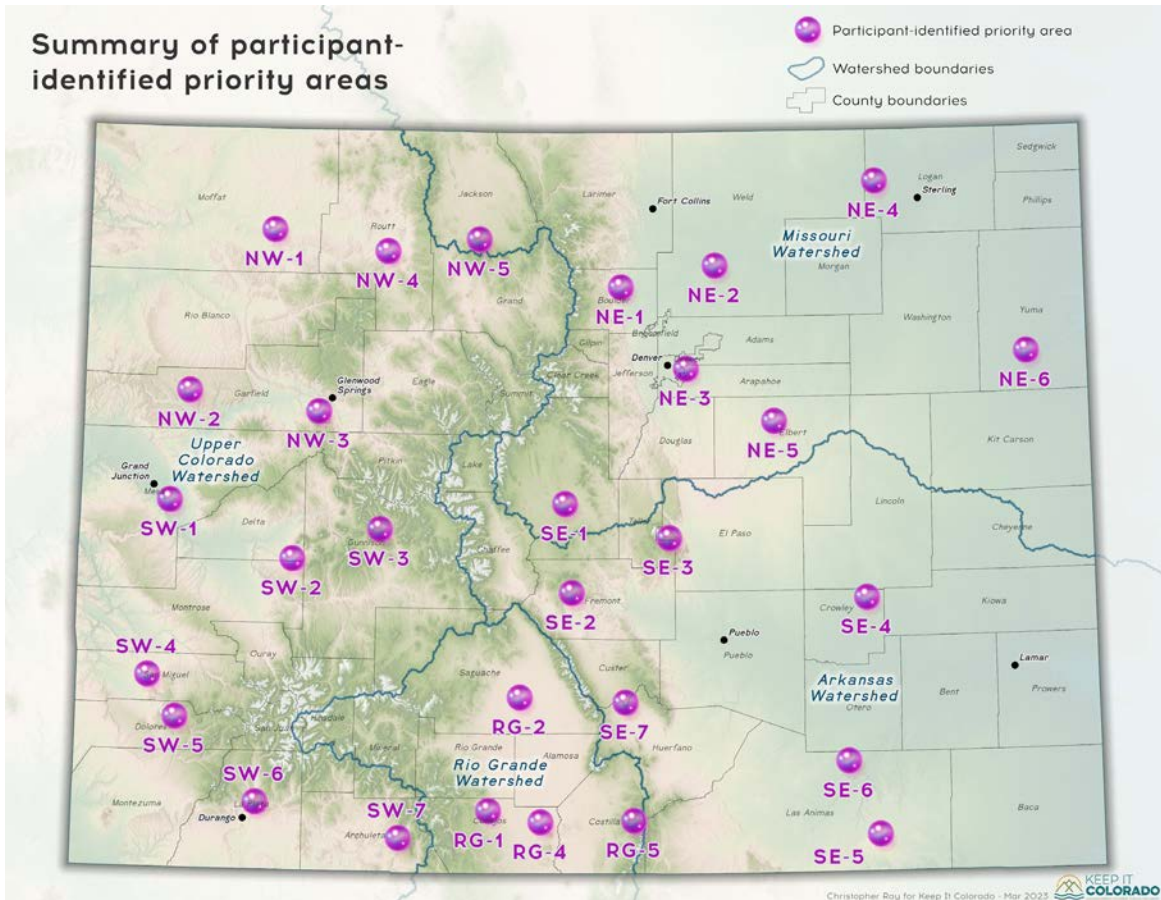


Figure 10 | This map represents a summary of participant-generated priority landscapes. Overlaying all the maps together clearly demonstrates the need for important conservation work across Colorado.

These maps can serve as a starting place for future collaboration among conservation partners. Some of these areas overlap with multiple pillars in the roadmap.

While it is important to consider areas that have multiple values, each area stands on its own as a priority opportunity and important for conservation efforts.

About the Resilient and Connected Network (RCN)

The Resilient and Connected Network (RCN) analysis highlights climate-resilient sites and landscapes across the United States that, if protected or otherwise conserved, can sustain native biodiversity and ecological functions under a changing climate. Created through 10 years of collaborative analysis led by The Nature Conservancy, the RCN has been called “a paradigm shift in how we think about large landscape conservation” by Andrew Bowman, president of the Land Trust Alliance. Representing 33% of the U.S., the RCN is a foundation for accelerating the pace and scale of climate-resilient conservation.

The RCN analysis integrates science-based national assessments of site resilience, landscape connectivity and biodiversity. All three elements are critical for climate-resilient conservation of native species, habitats, and ecosystem services into the future. The RCN can also be easily combined with complementary datasets representing other key conservation priorities such as equitable public access, carbon sequestration, environmental health, and protection of working lands, including farms and ranches.

The results of the RCN analysis suggest compelling opportunities for elevating climate-resilient conservation as a statewide priority in Colorado and across the country. More than 50% of Colorado is within the RCN and approximately 16 million acres is private owned lands that have not been conserved. With willing landowners, these lands could be prioritized for a wide range of conservation initiatives to avoid conversion, improve management, increase protection and enhance connectivity. There are also many additional opportunities to improve management on RCN lands that are already protected, and to increase the RCN through strategic habitat restoration along fragmented corridors. The RCN can serve as an ecological foundation for climate resiliency, upon which other important conservation tools, priorities and planning frameworks can be layered.

For a comprehensive and up-to-date analysis, users are encouraged to reference the online resource directly: [The Nature Conservancy's Resilient & Connected Network analysis](#).



About the Conservation Data Explorer (CODEX)

A coalition of partners has joined with the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) and NatureServe to build an interactive mapping tool that hosts critical natural resources data for conservation planners and decision makers in Colorado. The Colorado Conservation Data Explorer (CODEX) is a one-stop shop for synthesizing conservation data in Colorado catered to Colorado's unique conservation needs. The CODEX:

- Synthesizes sensitive species data from CNHP, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies (coming soon), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service along with myriad related statewide datasets for conservation planning;
- Helps users consider potential activities in the context of comprehensive conservation planning information;
- Allows users to submit project areas for preliminary review, make maps, run analyses and complete regulatory compliance steps;
- Provides a range of functions to support all phases of the conservation easement process, from identifying ideal locations for conservation easements to calculating an estimated annual economic benefit of conserved properties in terms of ecological services;
- Includes COMaP, Colorado's comprehensive map of conservation easements and other conserved lands;
- Supports trail and other recreational planning, and implementation of the SHIFT principles for advancing outdoor recreation and conservation, and the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan;
- Provides conservation information on biological diversity, protected lands, hydrology and other natural resources for planning purposes, and also allows users to screen a project area for potential impacts to threatened, endangered and special-concern species and their habitats.

For a comprehensive and up-to-date analysis, users are encouraged to reference the online resource directly: [CNHP's Colorado Conservation Data Explorer \(CODEX\)](#).



Sacramento Creek Ranch | Mountain Area Land Trust



APPENDIX E: Aligning This Plan in Colorado

The pillars identified in this roadmap represent the collective vision of what the private land conservation community can accomplish together. It offers a comprehensive framework to help address the most pressing challenges facing Colorado. But accomplishing the goals will take the efforts of a broader community in Colorado that shares similar goals and aligns with the vision.

Keep It Colorado's intention is that other statewide plans that are currently being developed or updated will integrate the goals and strategies of *Conserving Colorado: A 10-year Roadmap for the Future of Private Land Conservation*. Recognizing that land has multiple conservation values, from habitat health to community health, incorporating elements of private land conservation planning into broader efforts will help ensure that all aspects of conservation are considered integral to a healthier and more vibrant Colorado.

The conservation community sees existing and future opportunities to align with the following plans, among others:

- *Colorado Water Plan*
- *State Wildlife Action Plan*
- *Central Grasslands Roadmap*
- the forthcoming *Statewide Recreation, Conservation and Climate Resilience Plan*

As this roadmap is a "Living Plan" (see *Appendix B: Shared Terminology and Principles*), there are many opportunities to collaborate and integrate with other planning initiatives at the statewide level. Since this roadmap serves as a statewide framework that organizations can adapt and implement regionally, and has room to evolve, new opportunities can influence future iterations of this roadmap and others.



Bear Creek Falls | Keep It Colorado



APPENDIX F:

References and Resources

Reports, Plans and Other Publications

- Arkansas Basin Conservation Alliance Case Statement, ABCA and Keep It Colorado
- Aspen Valley Land Trust Comprehensive Conservation Plan
- Basin Implementation Plans, Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB)
- Central Grasslands Roadmap
- Colorado Water Plan, CWCB
- Colorado Climate Action Plan, Colorado State Agencies
- Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes, National Park Service (NPS)
- Opportunities to Improve Sensitive Habitat and Movement Route Connectivity for Colorado's Big Game Species, Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) State Trails Program
- Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes, NPS
- State Wildlife Action Plan, CPW
- Stream Management Plan Resource Library, CWCB
- Unnamed NRCS study on the economic value of the fruit industry in western Colorado DEIJ Resources
- Conservation Standards: Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Approaches
- Failing Forward Report (2013)
- New Perspectives on Black Ecology (Webinar, 2020)
- Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation, Version 4.0 (Report, 2020)

- Poll: Black and Latinx People Care More About Climate Change Than White People (Vice News, 2021)

Mapping and Other Digital Tools

- **Resilient & Connected Network** analysis, The Nature Conservancy
- **Colorado Conservation Data Explorer (CODEX)**, Colorado Natural Heritage Program
- **ParkServe**, Trust for Public Land
- **Community Health Equity Map**, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- LandPKS Tool
- Rangeland Analysis Platform
- Resilient Land Mapping Tool, The Nature Conservancy

Individuals, Organizations and Collaboratives

- Gabe Donaldson, prescribed fire
- Emily Fairfax, beavers
- Sherri Tippy, beavers
- Heart of the Rockies Initiative
- Quivira Coalition
- Colorado Agricultural Leadership Program
- PLAN JeffCo Stewardship Academy

Other

- Economic Impact Studies for Colorado Conservation Programs, Tatiana Bailey, Ph.D.
- Holistic Management, Savory Institute
- Let's Talk About Climate Webinar Part and Part II, Keep It Colorado



APPENDIX G: Data Sources

- **Colorado River Basin Supply and Demand Study**, U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation (2012)
- **Colorado's return on investments in conservation easements: Conservation Easement Tax Credit program and Great Outdoors Colorado**, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado (Seidl, A., Anderson, D., Bennett, D., Greenwell, A., and Menefee, M. 2017)
- **Keep It Colorado's Understanding and supporting the work of land trusts (2020)**
- **Colorado College's State of the Rockies Project 2022 Conservation in the West Poll (2022)**
- **Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Great Outdoors Colorado FY 2021-22 Investment Proposal**



Glacier Community Farms | Kara Williard



APPENDIX H: Board of Directors and Advisory Council

The Keep It Colorado board of directors consists of representatives of small, medium, large and statewide land trusts from throughout Colorado, as well as representatives from funding and partner organizations, including Gates Family Foundation and Land Trust Alliance.

Suzanne Stephens (Chair)

Aspen Valley Land Trust

Rebecca Jewett (Immediate Past Chair)

Palmer Land Conservancy

Jeffrey Boring (Vice Chair)

Estes Valley Land Trust

Travis Custer (Secretary and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee Chair)

Montezuma Land Conservancy

Anna Schmid (Treasurer)

Gates Family Foundation

Jim Petterson (Policy Committee Chair)

Trust for Public Land

Erik Glenn (Policy Committee Vice Chair)

Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust

Carlos Fernández (Development Committee Chair)

The Nature Conservancy

Rob Bleiberg (Programs Committee Chair)

Colorado West Land Trust

Tony Caligiuri

Colorado Open Lands

Jessica Jay

Conservation Law, P.C.

Marcie Bidwell

Land Trust Alliance, ex officio

Keep It Colorado's board of directors voted to approve this plan on March 15, 2023.

The advisory council for *Conserving Colorado* comprised the following organizations and individuals (listed in alphabetical order by organization):

Dave Erickson

Aspen Valley Land Trust

Doug Vilsack

Bureau of Land Management-Colorado,
formerly of Colorado Department of Natural
Resources

Rick Bachand

City of Fort Collins Natural Areas

Maggie Hanna

Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust

Jamie D'Amico

Colorado Department of Public Health and
Environment

Tom Butts

Colorado Environmental Public Health Services

David Anderson

Colorado Natural Heritage Program

Michael Menefee

Colorado Natural Heritage Program

Sarah Parmar

Colorado Open Lands

Ilana Moir

Colorado West Land Trust

Scott Segerstrom

Colorado Youth Corps Association

Jordan Burningham

Conservation Legacy

Jake Jones

Crested Butte Land Trust

Jessica Foulis

Eagle Valley Land Trust

Amanda Hill

Gates Family Foundation,
formerly of Land Trust Alliance

Chris Yuan-Farrell

Great Outdoors Colorado

Micaela Iron Shell-Dominguez

International Indigenous Youth Council

Melissa Daruna

Keep It Colorado

Hannah George

Keep It Colorado

Linda Lidov

Keep It Colorado

Leander Lacy

Lacy Consulting Services

Travis Custer

Montezuma Land Conservancy

Rebecca Jewett

Palmer Land Conservancy

Dale Will

Pitkin County Open Space and Trails

Matt Gray

Rocky Mountain Innovation Lab

Drew Rayburn

The Nature Conservancy

Paige Lewis

The Nature Conservancy

Jacob Bornstein

Wellstone Collaborative Strategies



Mule Deer | Ken Walker



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