



PHOTO BY CHARLIE JOHNSON

# ESTES VALLEY LAND TRUST COMMUNIQUE

JUNE 2015



The mission of the Estes Valley Land Trust is to preserve and protect open space, valleys, wetlands, streams, ranch lands, and wildlife habitat in the Estes Valley and surrounding area. Lands adjacent to Rocky Mountain National Park and the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest are of special concern.

## 2015 BREAKFAST SERIES: OUR CHANGING NATURE

Our natural world is changing. It always has been, really. But in recent years, we have become increasingly aware of ways that evolution, air pollution, climate change, land-use changes, resource extraction, and weather events are affecting the world around us. At our 2015 Summer Breakfast Series, we are looking at how scientists and conservation-minded citizens are monitoring and interfacing with these changes to encourage healthy, resilient natural systems.

Citizen Science is the topic of June's breakfast, at which a panel of scientists will discuss research programs that are monitoring change indicators through data collection by average citizens of all ages and skill levels. These "citizen scientists" monitor and report behaviors and characteristics of butterflies, pikas, raptors, limber pines, wildflowers, dragonflies, and much more. Learn how you can be a citizen scientist and make valuable contributions to these research programs, sometimes without leaving your own backyard!

The topic of the July breakfast is NEON (National Ecological Observatory Network), a long-term continent-wide study of the ecological impacts of climate change, land-use change, and invasive species. Two NEON staff will discuss the purpose of the twenty data-collection towers that are being built across the U.S, including one in Tahosa Valley, and how information resulting from the study will be

used to inform environmental policy and management.

At the August breakfast, we will re-visit the 2014 Breakfast Series theme to see what progress has been made in the Estes Valley flood recovery efforts. In the past year, a new citizen-led non-profit organization has formed that is taking the lead on many of the local flood recovery projects. Representatives from this new organization, called the Estes Valley Watershed Coalition (see page 4), will share information about projects both in progress and under consideration to enhance resiliency along Estes Park's stream corridors.

The public is welcome and encouraged to attend both the June and July breakfasts. The members-only August breakfast will include our brief annual meeting. Not a member? Well then, it's time to join! For only \$35 per family you are welcome to join the conservation community and be a full participant in the activities of this wonderful group. You can visit EVLT's website at [www.evlandtrust.org](http://www.evlandtrust.org) to become a member, or become a member when you attend one of the breakfasts this summer.

Details about the 2015 Summer Breakfast events are provided on page 3 of this newsletter. We look forward to seeing you at all three this summer!



## SEATS OF HONOR

Thanks to gracious donations from the families of former EVLT Directors, you will soon see decorative, nature-themed benches in honor of those Directors. The benches will be installed along the Riverwalk in downtown Estes Park, across the Big Thompson River from two of EVLT's earliest and most visible conservation easements (see below). Plaques will identify the honorees who devoted many thousands of hours to ensure that Estes Park's mountain vistas and wildlife habitats will be forever preserved. Sit awhile and enjoy the enduring legacies of these dedicated individuals!



## OPEN SPACE SPOTLIGHT



### GATEWAY AND AMERICAN LEGION: THE CONSERVATION EASEMENTS THAT PROTECT VIEWS FROM THE ESTES PARK RIVERWALK

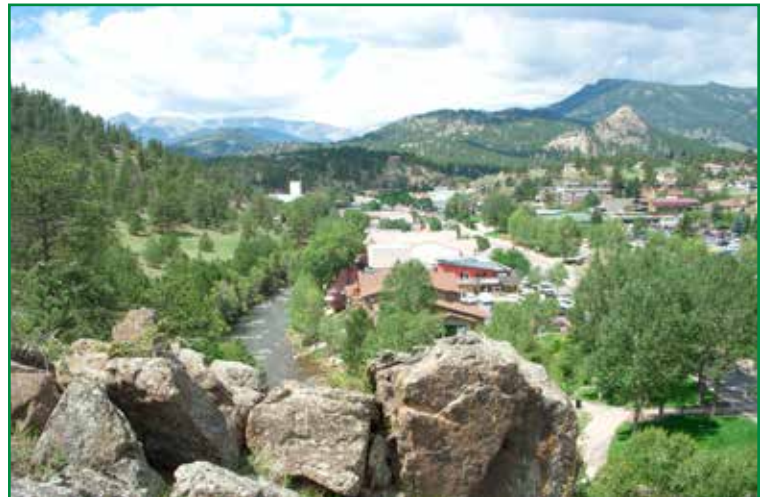
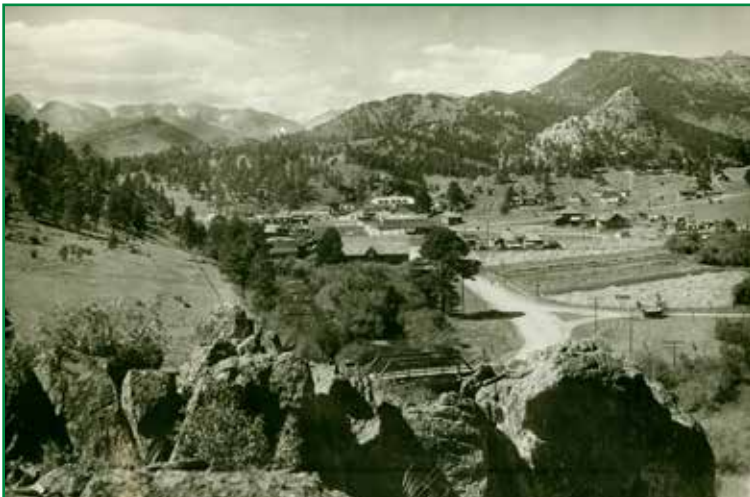
As you stroll along the Riverwalk downstream from the confluence bridge in downtown Estes Park, soothed by the sound of the Big Thompson River and the serenity of the adjacent undeveloped hillside, you can easily forget that you are only a few yards from the hubbub of summer in Estes Park. However, if it weren't for the hard work and collaboration of EVLT, its forward-thinking members, and several agencies, you could instead be looking at a hillside covered by houses.

This property that serves as a beautiful backdrop to downtown Estes was zoned to allow 14 residences perched on the steep hillside. In 1989, when seven acres of the land were offered for sale by Estes Park resident Lynella Grant, the Town and the Estes Park Urban Renewal Authority (EPURA) worked to purchase it. However, the two agencies did not have sufficient resources to pay the \$50,000 price. With a deadline of only two months, the newly-formed EVLT stepped up and raised \$13,000 from 75 members, enough to secure the purchase of the property. The Town now owns the property and EVLT

holds a conservation easement on it, ensuring the property remains in its undeveloped state in perpetuity. (About fifty feet of land adjacent to the river is not included in the easement.) This Gateway Conservation Easement was EVLT's second easement.

Sixteen years later, in 2004, an additional 1.6 acres of the hillside west of the Gateway easement was protected. The Larimer County Open Lands Program, the Town of Estes Park, and EVLT paid \$75,000 for the land owned by the Estes Park Post of the American Legion, which had been gifted the land by resident John Ramey. After its purchase, EVLT deeded the property to the Town and it became the American Legion Conservation Easement, EVLT's 100th easement.

The terms of the conservation easements allow for a bicycle path to be built and for picnic tables to be installed in one small area. Also the Town may continue its longtime tradition of displaying holiday lights there. However, the open hillside will always remain a lovely gem for the enjoyment of residents and visitors to Estes Park.



The Gateway and American Legion Conservation Easements protect views south of the Big Thompson River from downtown Estes Park. With the exception of a few more trees, the area, on the left side of the photos, looks very similar in circa 1910 (left photo) and in 2012 (right photo). Photos courtesy of Estes Park Museum.



Like us on Facebook! When news happens—big events or small—you will find timely posts to keep you informed.

Also, check out our improved website at [www.evlnt.org](http://www.evlnt.org) where you will find updated information, blog posts, beautiful photos, and everything "EVLT." It's also a great place to send people who want to know more about us and what we do.



PHOTOS BY JIM SWANEY

## JUNE EVENT

Friday (yes, **FRIDAY!**), June 19, 8 a.m.

“Citizen Science Opportunities for You”

By a panel of experts:

- Mike Figgs – Cliff Nesting Raptors
- Sarah Newman – Project BudBurst
- Chris Ray – Front Range Pika Project
- Heather Young – Project Noah
- Therese Johnson – RMNP studies

*What ecological studies are being conducted locally that include roles for laypersons of all ages? How do citizen scientists play an important role in collecting data? How can I become a citizen scientist?*

Hermit Park Open Space  
Group Use Pavillion

**RSVP by 10:00 a.m. Monday, June 15.**

Please include your email address so we can send you a complimentary park entry pass.



## JULY EVENT

Saturday, July 18, 8 a.m.

“National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON): A Tahosa Valley Facility to Study Ecological Changes”

By NEON staff:

- Tracey Baldwin – Regional Field Operations Manager, and
- Nick Shroeter – Regional Assistant Manager

*What is the purpose of that big tower in Tahosa Valley? What is NEON? Who can use the data that are being collected? How will the research benefit the Estes Valley?*

Salvation Army High Peak Camp  
8 miles south of Estes Park on Hwy. 7  
Please bring your own chair.

**RSVP by 5:00 p.m. Monday, July 13.**



PHOTO BY SANDY LINDQUIST

## AUGUST EVENT

Saturday, August 15, 8 a.m.

“River Restoration Update” and Annual Meeting – Members Only

By Estes Valley Watershed Coalition Staff and Consultants (to be named). Last year we heard from Julie Ash about the development of the Fall River and Fish Creek Master Plans for Resiliency. Those plans are complete – it’s time for an update on restoration activities.

*What is being done to make our rivers more resilient? Will wildlife habitat along the streams be restored? When will the work be done? Who is making the decisions?*

Fall River Hydroplant Picnic Shelter  
1700 Fish Hatchery Rd.

**RSVP by 5:00 p.m. Monday, Aug. 10.**

# BREAKFAST DETAILS YOU NEED TO KNOW

1. Reservations are required for all summer breakfast events. Note RSVP deadlines above.

2. Make your reservations by telephone: 970-577-6837 (you can leave a message after hours); or by email: [evlt@evlandtrust.org](mailto:evlt@evlandtrust.org).

3. Provide your first and last name for each reservation (for name badges).

4. Breakfast will be served by Catering for All Occasions.

Breakfast will include an egg entree, fresh fruit, pastries, juice, and hot coffee.

5. Cost for the breakfast is \$15 per person (\$5 for K-12 students, \$0 for preschoolers), payable by cash or check at the event.

6. All three breakfast events will be held outdoors. Please bring a jacket, sunglasses, hat, sunscreen and drinking water for after breakfast. Bring your own chair for the July breakfast.



## A New Collaboration: EVL and the Estes Valley Watershed Coalition

For the past eighteen months Estes Valley Land Trust has played a significant role in assisting the Estes Valley in its ongoing recovery from the devastating September 2013 floods. EVLT acquired grant funding to provide owners of flood-damaged properties with native seeds and trees. EVLT organized volunteer workdays for flood debris removal and revegetation projects. EVLT has contributed to the River Resiliency Master Planning process for Fish Creek and Fall River since it began in early 2014.

Now, recognizing the need to continue its efforts to support flood recovery and river sustainability, EVLT is assisting with the formation of a new non-profit, the Estes Valley Watershed Coalition (EVWC), and has agreed to serve as the Fiscal Sponsor for the organization. In addition, EVLT will be participating on EVWC's Advisory Group, which is made up of stakeholder organizations within the Estes Valley.

### What Is the Estes Valley Watershed Coalition?

EVWC is a non-profit organization whose mission is to "promote an ecologically healthy watershed that also seeks to maximize public benefits and minimize public risk, through community engagement and sound science." It is comprised of citizens of the Estes Valley serving voluntarily to support a safe and environmentally sound watershed for the community.

EVWC's Board of Directors includes two representatives each from four stream corridors (Fall River, Fish Creek, Upper Big Thompson, and Black Canyon) as well as three at-large members.

### What Is Estes Valley Land Trust's Role as Fiscal Sponsor?

EVL is providing administrative and financial services to the Coalition, including accepting grant and donor funding on behalf of the Coalition, while leaving all programmatic control in the hands of the EVWC directors. The Land Trust will receive a nominal fee from EVWC for its services as Fiscal Sponsor.

### What Is Estes Valley Land Trust's Role on the Advisory Group?

The Advisory Group includes potential stakeholders for many of the projects, including representatives from the Town, the Sanitation Districts, the Recreation and Parks District, the Land Trust, and similar organizations. In this role, EVLT will advise the Coalition on the use of conservation easements as a tool to protect stream corridors, open space, and riparian wildlife habitat while benefiting property owners.

### What Are the Next Steps?

Initial grant funding is in the form of a capacity grant to support a paid staff position, a planning grant to help determine the most effective way to prioritize and begin implementation projects from the Master Plans, and a planning grant to conduct a Master Planning process for the Upper Big Thompson River. A grant proposal is under review for the first restoration implementation project on a segment of Fall River.

The search for a Watershed Coordinator by the EVWC Board of Directors is currently underway. For the near future, the Coordinator will share space in the Estes Valley Land Trust offices. This will aid in effectively establishing the various, and often separate, administrative, financial, and operational functions while decreasing overhead costs to EVWC.

### How Can I Stay Informed about EVWC's Projects?

A website and social media presence will be established and more information will be distributed through various media outlets. Coalition meetings are held every other Wednesday evening at the Estes Valley Library. Anyone interested in supporting the activities of the Estes Valley Watershed Coalition is welcome to attend. Questions? Contact the EVLT office at 970-577-6837 or [evlt@evlandtrust.org](mailto:evlt@evlandtrust.org).



## NEW OPEN SPACES PROTECTED FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

In recent months, EVLT closed on two additional conservation easements and we are very excited about the wildlife habitat and scenic values these lands encompass. One property is along Devils Gulch Road, nestled among the striking rock features of Lumpy Ridge and hosting a healthy aspen grove. The other easement is near the summit of Prospect Mountain, ensuring this highly-visible and scenic property forever will remain natural and unaffected by development.



Also, within the next couple of weeks we expect to complete a conservation easement on another beautiful, 40-acre property in the Little Valley area. Stay tuned to our Facebook page and website at [www.evlandtrust.org](http://www.evlandtrust.org) for updates on this and other exciting land conservation news in the Estes Valley!



*In April, children (and adults) had fun learning about wildlife habitats at EVLT's booth at GeoFest, sponsored by Estes Park Learning Place.*



# EAGLE ROCK STUDENTS KICK OFF EVLT'S 2015 REVEGETATION PROGRAM

EVLT is continuing to expand how we put our mission into practice by working with landowners to plant trees, native grass and wildflowers on flood-damaged streamside properties. Thanks to support from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), in 2015 EVLT is focusing on restoring properties under conservation easement to create more resilient and healthy river systems.

A critical component of the 2015 revegetation program is the use of volunteers. On May 15th, demonstrating their strong commitment to community service, 70 Eagle Rock students and staff volunteered on EVLT revegetation projects as a part of their biannual EagleServe Day. Despite Mother Nature bringing occasional rain and even hail, the students worked hard to plant over 1,000 trees and many hundred acres of grasses and wildflowers, and installed 700 square yards of erosion-control blankets. Thanks to their efforts, three properties are well on their way to full recovery from the devastating floods. We at EVLT are highly impressed with the students and very grateful for their service!

EVLT is seeking volunteers to assist with other revegetation projects through the early summer and into the fall. If you're interested in becoming a volunteer, please email the Land Trust at [evlt@evlandtrust.org](mailto:evlt@evlandtrust.org). You will be notified prior to each workday and can decide then whether you can help. Most workdays last about four hours. All ages and abilities are welcome. Food and refreshments are provided.



## LAND PROTECTION FUND

EVLT has established a new Land Protection Fund, and we request your support. You can make it easier for landowners to preserve their properties with conservation easements. Your donation to the fund will directly preserve spectacular mountain views and ensure abundant wildlife habitat.

### Why is the fund needed?

Landowners typically gain substantial intrinsic and financial rewards by conserving their property with a conservation easement. However, those financial rewards are not realized until after the easement is finalized. During the often-lengthy process of placing an easement on their land, owners pay significant appraisal and other out-of-pocket costs. Although these costs are usually much less than the financial benefit realized once the easement is finalized, they may prevent owners from proceeding.

Also, occasionally we have the opportunity to preserve a very-high priority property by purchasing a conservation easement. However, we may need the funds quickly before the opportunity is lost. Having the Land Protection Fund will allow us to purchase the easement and give us the needed time to raise money to replenish the fund.

### How will the fund be used?

The fund will be a revolving fund for interest-free loans to easement

donors to assist with costs. The loans will be repaid by the landowners when the transaction is complete and their tax benefits are realized.

The fund may also be used to fund or partially fund acquisitions of conservation easements on properties with exceptionally high conservation values in advance of fundraising efforts that will pay for the purchase.

### How much money is needed in the fund?

At any one time, EVLT is typically working with three or more landowners interested in preserving their property, each facing initial out-of-pocket costs of \$15,000 or more. The more money in the fund, the more we can loan to offset these costs.

### What are the benefits?

The Land Protection Fund is a win-win for you and everyone who loves the Estes Valley. As a revolving fund, your donation will be used and re-used to preserve land with high conservation values. This means that additional mountain vistas and wildlife habitats will be forever preserved for future generations.

All donations to this fund, and other donations to EVLT, are 100% tax deductible. Please write "Land Protection Fund" on the memo line of your check. For more information, please contact Executive Director Mary Banken at 970-577-6837.



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## FIRST CLASS MAIL

Make your  
 reservation by  
**Monday, June 15**  
 for our June  
 Breakfast Event!  
 See details inside.

### **Congratulations to Holli Holmes and James Steadman as the 2015 recipients of the Estes Valley Land Trust Scholarship awards!**

This scholarship program honors students who demonstrate a love and dedication to the natural world. This fall Holli will begin her study of conservation biology and James will pursue a degree in fire sciences and plans to eventually become a wildlands firefighter. The scholarships underscore EVLT's commitment to conservation for future generations. Directors Art French and Harriette Woodard were on hand for the senior awards ceremony to announce the winners of the two \$500 scholarships.



### **100 YEARS AND COUNTING!**

During this Centennial of Rocky Mountain National Park, we celebrate 28 years of partnership with the park. Protection of lands that are adjacent to RMNP is one of the key tenets of EVLT's mission statement. This allows wildlife to move safely to and from the park and visitors to enjoy views from the park that are uncluttered by development.

We look forward to the next 100 years of partnership with Rocky's dedicated staff!

## **EVLT OFFICERS, DIRECTORS & STAFF**

PRESIDENT	Jim Broomfield
VICE PRESIDENT	Craig Axtell, Leo Weber, James White, Marsha Yelick
SECRETARY	Ken Martin
ASSISTANT SECRETARY	Alice Reuman
TREASURER	Curt Gleaves
ASSISTANT TREASURER	Harriette Woodard
DIRECTOR	Art French, Charlie Johnson, John Nolan, Peter Sinnott
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Mary Banken
STEWARDSHIP COORDINATOR	Erica Goad
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT	Jan Swaney

