

# Building On A Legacy

**Inside:**  
Improving our Easements  
Open Space & Outdoor Rec Plan  
Meet our Forever Estes Circle



**November 2019**





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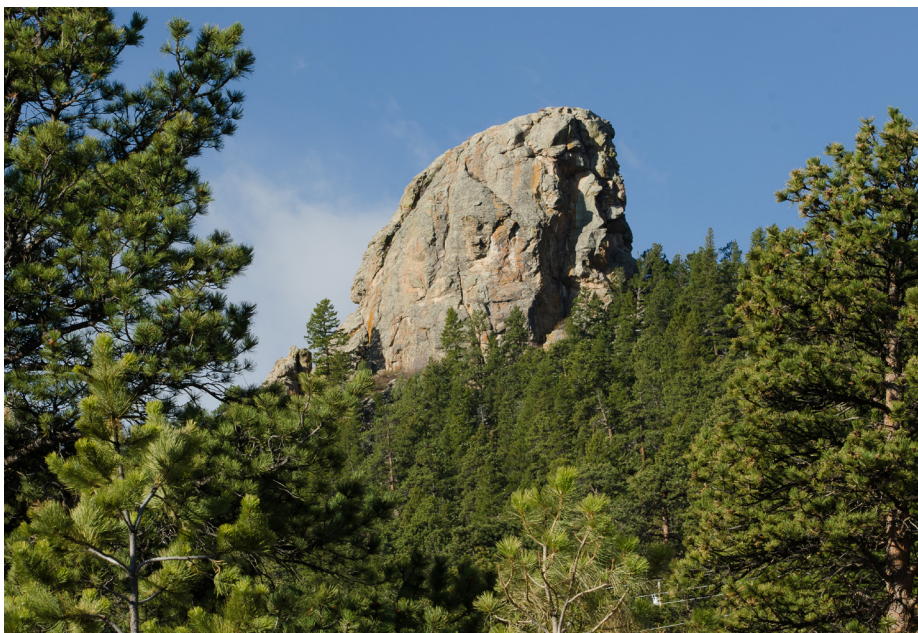
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**Our mission is to preserve and protect open space, valleys, wetlands, streams, ranch lands, and wildlife habitat in the Estes Valley and surrounding area.**



Above: The Thumb rock feature is located on an EVLT easement. © 2012 James Frank  
Front Cover: Elk during the rut in Estes. Photo by Jim Ward

## New Board Members

# Q&A

In August, EVLT members voted in two new board members: Melissa Strong and Don Smith.

### **Tell us about yourself.**

**Melissa:** I live in Estes Park and I run the restaurant Bird & Jim, climb, and volunteer in Rocky Mountain National Park. I also climb and work to provide and preserve climbing access in Hueco Tanks State Historic Park in East El Paso TX where my husband Adam and I have a second home.

**Don:** I am an Associate Professor of the Practice of Law at the University of Denver's Sturm College of Law. I also edit a publication for the International Bar Association.

### **Why do you want to serve on the EVLT Board?**

**Melissa:** I have been dedicated to preserving public lands and protecting access for the past fifteen years. I have lived full time in Estes Park since 1996 and have witnessed much development and growth. Working with EVLT is a perfect fit for me to continue my passion for preserving public lands and creating open spaces for us and all future generations to enjoy.

**Don:** All of the generations before ours have respected and protected our open spaces, national parks, and wilderness areas. In a sense, we inherited these magnificent lands from our ancestors. It is my honor to be involved with the EVLT and continue this important tradition.

# Strengthening a Conservation Easement

Conserving new acres is a land trust's most common measure of success. Our most recent conservation easement, on the YMCA of the Rockies property, increased our total acreage to 9,881 acres. Our conservation portfolio will soon exceed 10,000 acres. (See page four for details on how the land trust is becoming more strategic with our conservation approach).

Measuring the number of acres is certainly important, but success could also include improving the quality of the acres already conserved. If any of our conservation easements were improved to be more restrictive, or provide additional public benefits, that too would be a measure success.

## Removing Building Envelopes

Most of the land trust's conservation easements permit the landowner to build at least one home, within a building envelope. The envelope generally allows accessory structures, such as a garage, barn or guest house. The envelope consolidates all development so it doesn't spread across the landscape and enables the owner to build the structures they want to live comfortably.

It's a common approach used by land trusts across the US; and it works.

But removing the right to build *anything* is even more protective of the environment.

The Estes Valley Land Trust is discussing amending two conservation easements and dissolving all unused development rights. In both cases, properties that could be fragmented with a building site and driveway will remain open and better for wildlife.

## Protecting Public Outdoor Recreation or Education

Protecting land for public outdoor recreation and education is also a common purpose for land trusts across the US. The Estes Valley Land Trust has a few local examples of conservation easements that specifically protect public access.



Amendments to allow hiking, where appropriate, enhance conservation values.  
Photo by Charlie Johnson

The Centennial Open Space at Knoll Willows Conservation Easement permits a trailhead, trails and non-motorized uses. This public park is a great place to enjoy a short walk, view downtown or watch wildlife.

The Hermit Park Open Space Conservation Easement allows hiking, camping and mountain biking on more than 1,300 acres. If you've not hiked the 2-mile trail to the top of Kruger Rock, you're missing out. The summit provides incredible views of the Estes Valley.

Protecting public access, especially areas where outdoor recreation has occurred for years, ensures that future generations can experience the same joy of nature.

## Amendments Enhance Conservation

The land trust's Board of Directors approved a policy in 2017 that permits conservation easements to be amended, if the change strengthens the conservation easement, makes it more enforceable or benefits the conservation values.

As new buyers purchase land already under conservation easement with the Estes Valley Land Trust, or original donors revisit their vision for the land under easement, it behooves the land trust to look for opportunities to strengthen our agreements. Protecting more land or providing additional public benefits by tweaking an existing conservation easement is a great conservation opportunity.



# You Are the Key to Conservation Success



© (2012) James Frank

Over 30 years have passed since our founders first met to form the Estes Valley Land Trust. Today the land trust continues to shine as a nationally recognized land trust with deep connections throughout the community.

A new planning effort is underway and reflects our founder's principles of working together for the good of the community. This planning effort, known as the Estes Valley Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Plan, is led by a steering committee with membership from Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Larimer County, US Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Conservancy, Town of Estes Park, Estes Valley Recreation and Park District, and local outdoor recreation, housing and business groups.

As our conservation work becomes more sophisticated, new tools and partnerships are needed.

Community involvement is also needed to develop an Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Plan that serves us all. The land trust will be hosting public meetings in early 2020 to get your input on where conservation and outdoor recreation is most needed.

Until then, the steering committee is gathering existing plans and data to better understand where crucial wildlife habitat, scenic areas, historic resources and trail connections are located. We are devoted to creating a science-based, community-supported plan that meets the long-term vision of both our founders and our current community.

**Be on the lookout for a public meeting invitation and survey this spring. What lands do you care most about in the valley? We want to know.**

## Our Monitors Make a Difference

Rick Ralph has been volunteering for us for two years now. While monitoring this summer, he noticed that a neighbor was building a home and their construction work had crossed over the property line and onto an eased property. A portion of the property was damaged and soil was disturbed.

Rick promptly came to the EVLT office and notified the staff. Staff were able to contact the developer of the neighboring property and worked with them to stop the damage and begin restoration. Within 48 hours, the violation was halted and vegetation restoration was underway!



**"I feel good about my volunteer work, knowing that the land trust cares about their volunteers and takes their job seriously." - Rick Ralph**

Monitors like Rick keep the Estes Valley beautiful and protected. Want to become a monitor? Contact us today!



Damage observed to an EVLT eased property.

# Forever Estes Circle **Faces**

Recently, six people have stepped forward and made a planned gift to the Estes Valley Land Trust, bringing our Forever Estes Circle to more than 30 members. Our newest Forever Estes Circle members have very different stories, but share a common purpose: a desire to preserve the Estes Valley.

## Deanna Ochs

Deanna grew up near Washington D.C. and loved playing outside, until the beloved woods near her home were converted to condos and strip malls.



**"I still remember the sadness I felt as the last stand of trees was taken down, replaced by a Toys R Us store. I realised then that if we want to preserve open space we must fight for it."**

Deanna moved to Estes Park in 1983 and worked for the Rocky Mountain Conservancy for ten years, delighted by the elk and bighorn sheep.

Today she works in Kenai Fjords National Park, writing about marine science research in Alaska's national parks, and daydreams about elk and bighorn sheep.

## Howard and Leanne Lauren

Both Howard and Leanne grew up playing outside because their mothers threw them out of the house... they didn't have a choice! Howard grew up in Brooklyn and Leanne grew up mostly in Texas. They moved to Estes Park eight years ago and are still in awe of the natural beauty.

They have volunteered with the Fort Collins Natural Areas Program and Larimer County Open Space, and now they volunteer as land trust monitors.

**"It's clear that donations to the land trust are well used, and our donation can help make our desire to preserve natural landscapes a reality."**



## Debbie and Jim Paddock

Debbie and Jim have lived in Estes Park for seven years.

When Debbie and Jim were considering a bequest, they thought of John Muir:



**"Thousands of tired, nerve shaken, over civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the Mountains is going home, that wildness is a necessity, and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life."**

To Debbie and Jim, a planned gift to the Estes Valley Land Trust ensures that the 'Mountains' and everything they represent are preserved for all.

## Karla Henderson

Karla volunteers for Rocky Mountain National Park and believes that spending time in nature provides both mental and physical health benefits. She spent her first summer in Estes in 1971, as a staff member at Cheley Colorado Camps.

When she moved here five years ago, she wanted to support her new community and was impressed by the people affiliated with the land trust.



**"I didn't own any land that warranted conservation but I wanted to contribute somehow. The Estes Valley Land Trust is a premier land conservation organization and I know my gift will help ensure conservation is always a local priority."**

Planned gifts are easy to setup and provide the land trust future revenue that protects open space and wildlife habitat. If you would like to join the Forever Estes Circle, or have already made a planned gift to the land trust and would like to be recognized, please contact Jeffrey Boring.



# Thank you to our donors!

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To learn more, visit [evlandtrust.org/donate](http://evlandtrust.org/donate)

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### **We would like to recognize our friends who passed away in 2019:**

**Jim Crain**, Founding Board Member  
**Linda McKee**, Member and Volunteer  
**Babs Mock**, Member and Volunteer  
**Gordon Pedersen**, Member and Easement Donor  
**Jim White**, Board Member for 26 years



Estes Valley Land Trust

1191 Woodstock Dr. #5

PO Box 663

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## Mark Your Calendars!



## Colorado Gives Day December 10th



The biggest single-day fundraiser of the year for us is Colorado Gives Day, when Coloradans come together to support the non-profit organizations that make our state great!

Donations can be made on December 10th, 2019 or scheduled ahead of time at [ColoradoGives.org](http://ColoradoGives.org).

### Join Us!

Bird & Jim will be donating 10% of sales on December 10th to EVLT and will be hosting Cowboy Brad from 4:30-6:30 PM. Eat good and feel good!