

Estes Valley Land Trust

June 2020 Newsletter



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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.



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Kenzie Hartt

Above: Springtime on the trail of the future Thumb Open Space.

Front Cover: This winter, the land trust began monitoring the Thumb Open Space for wildlife such as raptors. Photo by Jim Ward.

Thumb Open Space Q&A

In April, the Town of Estes Park Board of Trustees unanimously approved a grant award to purchase the Thumb Open Space, a property under conservation easement with the land trust.

Why is the Town buying land already under conservation easement?

The Town will manage the Thumb Open Space as a publicly-accessible natural area, much like Centennial Open Space at Knoll-Willows.

Does the land trust have to amend the conservation easement to allow this use?

The current easement will be amended to eliminate any residential development and give the Town the right to maintain the hiking trail and climbing routes so they are safer for visitors and better protect the environment.

How do the Town and land trust intend to balance recreation and conservation at the Thumb?

Before any new trails are established, or access is expanded, the Town will develop a management plan with land trust and public input. The plan will prevent access to areas that have sensitive natural or cultural resources, and provide sustainable access elsewhere.

Has the land trust ever participated in an acquisition like this?

Yes. The land trust, Larimer County and Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) partnered to acquire Hermit Park Open Space in 2007. Both properties preserve the environment and provide sustainable outdoor recreation.

Want to learn more? See page 6 and sign up for our August guided hike of the Thumb!

Summer Breakfasts



North American Bird Population Decline

Speaker: Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

Topic: Status, history, and solutions to the declining North American bird population.

When: July 18th at 9 AM

Where: Your own home - this event will be virtual.

Cost: Free!

RSVP: By July 16th at evlandtrust.org/rsvp



History and Ethics of Climbing in the Estes Valley

Speakers: Kevin Sturmer, Climbing Ranger, RMNP
Russell Hunter, Owner, Colorado Mountain School

Topic: Estes Valley climbing that respects plants, wildlife, and visitors.

When: August 15 at 9 AM

Where: Virtual or at Hidden Valley. Please check evlandtrust.org/rsvp for updates.

Cost: Free (virtual), or \$15 (Hidden Valley)

RSVP: By August 8th at evlandtrust.org/rsvp

Virtual Breakfast Details:

Members can get information about our breakfasts online at: evlandtrust.org/rsvp

Here, you can RSVP for upcoming events, learn how to access the virtual breakfast(s), and get updates on where the August breakfast will be held.

RSVP is required for both events. When you RSVP, you'll receive a link in an email to use on the morning of the event.

Any in-person events will follow recommended social distancing and other safety protocols related to the coronavirus.

Introducing the Estes Valley Stewardship Corps

When the coronavirus crisis hit Colorado, hundreds of local residents lost their job or were furloughed indefinitely, putting their basic needs such as housing, food, and medical care in jeopardy. Many members of our community are hourly employees, do not receive paid sick leave, and live from one paycheck to another.

The land trust realized that some of our community members are more vulnerable to the economic impacts of COVID-19 than others and that prolonged community-wide unemployment would negatively affect the quality of life we all share. Could the land trust provide some financial relief, help local businesses stay afloat, and better protect the lands currently under conservation easement?

Stewardship Corps is Born

The Civilian Conservation Corps, or the CCC, provided the inspiration for our Stewardship Corps. Instead of constructing buildings and roads on federal land, our Corps focuses on improving the ecological integrity of conserved private lands. Each member of the Stewardship Corps will spend 20 hours pulling weeds, improving forest health, and repairing eroded trails that damage the environment.

In return for this work, each Stewardship Corps member received \$500 from the land trust. More than \$15,000 was raised specifically for the Stewardship Corps and no membership donations are used for this program.

"This new program allows us to broaden our reach in the community, help people in need, and give them an opportunity to make a lasting impact on our conserved lands." - Jeffrey Boring, EVLT Executive Director

Corps Leads to Grant Funding

The Estes Park Nonprofit Resource Center stepped up and provided \$6,000 to the land trust to help cover the operational costs to run the Stewardship Corps.

"I was pleased to provide the land trust a COVID-19 Relief Fund grant to support the Stewardship Corps. What a wonderful way to provide basic needs in our community and introduce someone to the land trust!" - Laurie Dale Marshall, EPNRC Executive Director

Impact Felt

One of the intentions of the Stewardship Corps Program was to get the checks to Corps members quickly, to help prevent loss of housing or food insecurity. Within a few weeks of the governor's order to close all restaurants, references were checked, applicants were interviewed and 28 Corps members were selected.

EARN \$500 NOW, VOLUNTEER 20 HOURS LATER

EVSC
Estes Valley Stewardship Corps

PROJECTS INCLUDE:
Trail Building
Forest Health
Raptor Monitoring
Weed Control

APPLICATION DEADLINE: April 20, 2020
INFORMATION: evlandtrust.org/stewcorps

DETAILS: The Estes Valley Land Trust is providing \$500 to local individuals that have recently become unemployed due to COVID-19. We will pay up to 25 people \$500 each now, during the pandemic, for a pledge to volunteer for at least 20 hours after the pandemic ends.

Estes Valley Land Trust

The land trust received many thank you notes highlighting that the funds were being used to pay rent, purchase groceries, and pay utility bills.

"The relief extends far beyond financial support and into my daily life; it reminds me that I live in an amazing place full of kind, generous people and am blessed to be part of this amazing community."
- Stewardship Corps Member

We have all been through difficult times in our lives and benefitted from a helping hand. Thank you to the Stewardship Corps donors, you have given us the opportunity to deeply impact members of our community and help them create a meaningful connection with conserved lands.

Have a project idea for our Stewardship Corps?
Contact us and let's work together to improve our conserved lands!

Building a Safe Monitoring Season

The novel coronavirus has affected all of our lives and forced the land trust to modify our annual conservation easement monitoring approach. While other land trusts purchased satellite imagery or restricted all monitoring to staff only, the Estes Valley Land Trust established new safety protocols and provided all monitoring information online, to limit human contact and spread of the virus.

"We know that monitoring is a joy for so many of our volunteers and they provide a critical service to the land trust. Our goal was to provide a safe way for volunteers to monitor each easement."
- Kenzie Hartt, EVLT Stewardship Coordinator

For the first time, all monitoring materials were provided to volunteers online, so that each volunteer could prepare for and complete the site visit without interacting with staff, Board members or other volunteers. Volunteers were asked to monitor with a member of their household, wear masks, and practice social distancing when together.

Our annual monitoring luncheon was also canceled to avoid a large gathering. Instead, staff developed and shared two new training videos to make sure all volunteers were comfortable with our monitoring protocols.



Volunteers Don Smith (L) and Leo Weber (R) practice social distancing while monitoring.

"Kudos to the land trust for adapting to the coronavirus so smartly; the training videos were well done and providing all the materials online made monitoring even easier. Thanks!"
- Craig Axtell, Volunteer

Thank you volunteers for your flexibility this year, be safe and let us know how we can better serve you!

Volunteers needed for Finance Committee



Tracking our revenue and expenses allows us to budget for summer events that educate and bring people together.

Our volunteers are the backbone of the good work we do. In addition to monitoring our easements, volunteers serve on our Finance Committee and help develop quarterly balance sheets, profit and loss statements, and other reports the Board uses to provide financial oversight.

If you have a background in finance and want to support the land trust, we need you. Contact Jeffrey Boring, Executive Director, for more details.

Come Hike with Us!

The land trust is hosting four member hikes this summer and we hope you can join us. These easy hikes give our members a unique opportunity to see land preserved by the land trust and meet some of our landowners.

All hikes are free of charge and include a complimentary lunch.

Due to the coronavirus, each hike will be limited in size and all participants will practice social distance protocols. Hikes may be rescheduled or canceled due to any future restrictions.

Please limit your registration to just one hike so we have enough space for everyone. **Register online at evlandtrust.org/rsvp.**



*Meadowdale Ranch photo
by Charlie Johnson*

Bear Gulch Ranch

This conservation easement is located at the foot of Twin Sisters, protects a beautiful section of Tahosa Creek, and has marvelous views of Longs Peak and Mount Meeker.

When: 11 AM - 2 PM, Tuesday, July 28

Thumb Open Space

Hike the existing trail to the Thumb rock outcrop and learn how the land trust and the Town of Estes Park have partnered to protect wildlife habitat and a historic climbing area.

When: 11 AM – 2 PM, Tuesday, August 4

Meadowdale Ranch

Everyone has seen this ranch's beautiful namesake meadow along Highway 36. This hike starts on the other side of the ranch, seldom seen by the public, and heads into Homestead Meadows.

When: 11 AM – 2 PM, Thursday, August 13

Middle Fork Ranch

Hike an old road through beautiful forest with great views of the Middle Saint Vrain Valley.

When: 11 AM – 3 PM, Thursday, August 20

Update on the Open Space Plan

The land trust has partnered with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Larimer County Natural Resources, Town of Estes Park, and others to develop the Estes Valley Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Plan. As this valley continues to grow and develop, we need to work together to ensure what we love most about it, such as abundant wildlife, sustainable recreation, and incredible natural scenery, are preserved forever.

Over 400 survey responses were received and will shape the goals and priorities of the Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Plan. A draft of the plan will be available this summer for public review and comment. Feel free to sign up for one of our summer hikes for a sneak peek of the plan.



Kenzie Hart

Searching for our Forever Home

This summer, the land trust celebrates our 33rd birthday and we're looking to settle down. One of our largest expenses each year is rent and while our current office provides an excellent workspace, we're looking for something more permanent.

"Since we preserve land in perpetuity, the land trust needs a permanent home in Estes Park."

-Leo Weber, Honorary Board Member

Owning an office space provides stability. The land trust would no longer have to make plans based on an annual lease or the possible sale of the rental property. Moving is also expensive and chaotic, while owning our office allows us to focus our expenses and time on preserving land and connecting people to nature - which is what we do best.

Donating real estate or setting up a retained life estate are two great ways to help the land trust find our forever home. In both cases the donor receives a charitable income tax deduction and with a retained life estate, the current owner continues to use the property. Imagine continuing to enjoy your beautiful mountain home and knowing someday it will help the Estes Valley Land Trust set permanent roots and preserve land forever.

If you would like more information about making a gift of real estate or a retained life estate, please contact Jeffrey Boring, Executive Director.

Land trust now an Accredited Charity

The Estes Valley Land Trust received another honor in 2019 and was recognized by the Better Business Bureau as an Accredited Charity. The BBB Charity Accreditation designation demonstrates our commitment to excellence and assures the public that their donations to the land trust are being handled responsibly and ethically.

In addition to the BBB Charity Accreditation, the Estes Valley Land Trust has earned a Guidestar Gold Seal of Transparency and has been accredited by the Land Trust Alliance since 2008.



Land Trust Bench Available Along Riverwalk

Since last fall the land trust has sold two benches that will be installed along the downtown Riverwalk. These beautiful benches provide a delightful and relaxing spot to enjoy the Big Thompson River and are a wonderful way to recognize someone you love.

Proceeds from the sale of our benches are used to conserve land throughout the Estes Valley. Please contact us if you would like to learn more about purchasing an EVLT Bench.

Go green and donate online!

You can easily make online donations and pay your membership dues with our online donation box.

Our donation page is **evlandtrust.org/donate**

Three steps and you're done - try it out next time you renew!

Want to sign up to get membership renewals by email? Email us at evlt@evlandtrust.org and we won't send a paper renewal form next time.



Estes Valley Land Trust
PO Box 663
Estes Park, CO 80517



Accredited since
2008

- Sound Finances
- Ethical Conduct
- Responsible Governance
- Lasting Stewardship

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*Sarah hiking the Three Transformers Trail in Glen Haven.
Alex proudly summiting a peak.*



Congrats Sarah and Alex!

Sarah Tarczali and Alex Leija are each recipients of the 2020 Estes Valley Land Trust Scholarship.

The two \$1,000 scholarships are awarded to Estes Park High School graduates that have volunteered their time or worked to protect the environment and are pursuing a degree at a university, college, or trade school.

Sarah was the president of the school's Environmental Club, the first Zero-Waste Intern, and will pursue a degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Colorado this fall. Alex also volunteered with the Environmental Club and has been hired to work on the trail crew in Rocky Mountain National Park. He has been accepted to a number of schools and plans to major in Environmental Studies.

Good luck, young environmentalists!