

Estes Valley Land Trust

December 2021 Newsletter



Estes Valley Land Trust

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Our mission is to conserve land throughout the Estes Valley and surrounding areas for current and future generations.



Above: Chalking up for her first climb at a land trust event.

Front Cover: The sun warms a snowy meadow in the Estes Valley.

Getting Outside Together

The pandemic reminded us of the importance of spending time outdoors. Parks and other public lands have seen unprecedented use in the last year and the land trust scheduled a few events to get people together and enjoy some time outside. Social connections and exercise are so important to our health.

Hikes were scheduled on two private ranches that are conserved by the Estes Valley Land Trust and a public park, managed by the Town of Estes Park. The land trust even

co-hosted a family-friendly climbing event with Kent Mountaineering, to encourage young people to get outside and enjoy nature.

“Being outside is so integral to a healthy lifestyle and I was thrilled to partner with Kent Mountaineering and give kids their first chance to rock climb”, said Jeffrey Boring, Executive Director.

The land trust wishes you a wonderful holiday season and looks forward to seeing you outside in 2022.

Monitoring Season a Wrap, Thanks to You!

The Estes Valley Land Trust is one of Colorado's only conservation organizations that rely on an army of volunteers to complete some of our most important work: to monitor each easement and confirm all conservation values are protected. Our amazing volunteers logged almost 1200 hours during this monitoring season.

With nearly 170 conservation easements, monitoring each easement, each year, is no easy task. Almost 100 volunteers participated in our monitoring program this year and covered nearly 10,000 acres of land.

"We care about Estes Park and monitor to ensure the health and preservation of natural areas in the Valley." Linda Kreider, land trust volunteer.

In 2021, there were no violations observed! That means that no prohibited structures or roads were built, and no illegal dumping, erosion, water pollution, or off-road motorized use was observed.

Although not a violation, weeds continue to be a problem across the valley and in recent years, our volunteers have reported on the expansion of non-native cheatgrass specifically. Concerns about catastrophic wildfire also come up frequently with landowners, especially with the drier and warmer climate we're experiencing across Colorado.

The land trust is exploring ways to support landowners with weed control and forest management. Stay tuned!



Volunteer Ray Metzler takes a bird's-eye view during a monitoring event.

Stewardship Corps Doin' Work!



Our Stewardship Corps was established in June 2020, to accomplish two goals: help members of the local workforce that were affected from the economic fallout of the COVID-19 crisis and support landowners who want to improve the ecological condition of their conserved properties.

Sixteen projects and over 230 hours of work were completed on conserved lands across the valley. Weeds such as musk and Canada thistle were pulled and disposed of properly, tree limbs and other woody debris that could spread wildfire were stacked for future controlled burns and social trails that cause erosion and are weed vectors were reseeded with native grass seed.

This is just some of the good work that resulted from connecting community members with the local landowners that help conserve the beautiful Estes Valley.

Listening to the Tribal Community

Native Americans were the first to call Colorado and the Estes Valley home and were pushed out of the state and subjected to atrocities many years ago, led by the US government. Over 40 tribes still have ties to the state and the Estes Valley Land Trust has begun to work with the Southern Arapaho tribe to better understand their connection to the valley and to work together and preserve sacred sites.

Tribal Connections for Over 3,000 Years

Archaeological and ethnographic evidence show there are numerous sites across the Estes Valley that were used for indigenous ritual purposes, including sites within what is now known as Rocky Mountain National Park, the Indian Peaks Wilderness Area and on privately-owned lands that have not been conserved.

Projectile points and pottery suggest that various tribes visited the Estes Valley and this area was part of a trade route between the Front Range and the Colorado Plateau and Southwest. As recently as the mid-19th Century, the Cheyenne, Arapaho and other tribes frequented the area. Contrary to popular opinion, tribal communities did not isolate themselves from one another and instead interacted frequently, at least until various US treaties uprooted the tribes and relocated them to reservations across the western US.

Place to Pray

The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes were ultimately relocated to reservations in Wyoming and Oklahoma. Although the tribes may no longer have physical access to all these sacred sites, their spiritual ties still exist. Fred Mosqueda, the Arapaho Coordinator of the Culture Program of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, shared the importance of this connection to Colorado lands:

“The land took care of the tribe...Colorado was and is still home for the Arapaho”

There are places where the Arapaho return to Colorado for ceremonial purposes, such a Council Tree near the Poudre River in Larimer County. Mr. Mosqueda suggests that tribal communities still feel a spiritual connection to the Estes Valley too and could return to other sacred sites if they are available. Recently Mr. Mosqueda visited Estes Park to bless the site of a women's monument. Returning to the valley to pray would be more of a private activity, as Mr. Mosqueda says “to pray, get humble and ask for spiritual guidance.”



Fred Mosqueda, Arapaho Coordinator of the Culture Program of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes (right).

Today's Focus

In addition to working with tribal communities to help preserve sacred sites and provide access for spiritual uses, it's important to understand some of the other issues they're focused on. One of those issues is the renaming of geographic areas, such as mountains in nearby Clear Creek County that use a Native American slur or remind indigenous people of the brutal Sand Creek Massacre.

Both renaming efforts were discussed by Mr. Mosqueda and Dr. Patty Limerick, the Chair of the Center for the American West, during a land trust event last June. Today, the renaming of both mountains has been endorsed by tribal communities and the Colorado Geographic Renaming Advisory Board. A final decision will be made by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names.

Working Together

The land trust's intention in working with tribal communities stems from our recently adopted core values. Specifically, the land trust strives to include everyone in our work, by actively listening and finding common ground, by working together and forming lasting relationships with our partners and by honoring the tribal communities that first called this region home.

Sovereign Nations such as the Cheyenne and Arapaho are important conservation partners and the land trust is eager to learn more about their connection to land. Our goal is to listen and understand first and to follow their lead.

Improved State Law Incentivizes Land Conservation

The conservation community, including the Estes Valley Land Trust, worked with the Colorado General Assembly to pass HB21-1233 this spring. This state law improves the conservation easement tax credit program significantly, resulting in a larger tax credit for anyone that donates a conservation easement to a certified land trust.

Now, for example, if a landowner donates a conservation easement to the Estes Valley Land Trust that is appraised at \$1 million, they are eligible for a \$900,000 Colorado income tax credit. This credit can be used to offset the donor's Colorado income tax burden or the credit can be sold.

This new incentive comes at the perfect time, as the Estes Valley Land Trust begins to implement the Estes Valley Open Space Plan and preserve another 5,000 acres of land.

If you are considering donating a conservation easement, please reach out to the land trust for more information.

Open Space Plan Receives Awards



The Estes Valley Open Space Plan, the guiding document the Estes Valley Land Trust uses to conserve another 5,000 acres of land, won two awards recently. The plan received a Colorado Chapter of the American Planning Association for Excellence in Environmental Planning and Colorado Open Space Alliance award for Outstanding Achievement in Partnering and Collaboration.

We continue to work with all of our conservation partners, including tribal communities, nonprofits, and government to build on our shared vision for the Estes Valley. We're thrilled to receive these awards, on behalf of all of our partners.

Local Businesswoman Plans a Gift



Our Forever Estes Circle is a group of donors that make a planned gift to the Estes Valley Land Trust. Our newest Forever Estes Circle member is Melissa Strong, a local business owner and member of the land trust's Board of Directors.

"I am passionate about preserving land, and now that I'm in my 40s, it's time to finalize my will", said Strong. "The Estes Valley Land Trust is one of the charities I love most and I'm excited to name them as one of my beneficiaries."

Once your loved ones are provided for, consider a gift in your will or trust, or by beneficiary designation. These gifts cost you nothing now, are easy to set up and make a powerful statement about preserving land forever.

See evlandtrust.org/donate/ to learn more about making a planned gift.

Thank you to our donors!

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**- Leo Weber and Deborah
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because it's a local
organization preserving
the green corridors
in Estes Park that I
treasure"**

– Alicia Rochambeau

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Joann Welton in honor of Art and
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Dennis and Michele Wolf in
memory of Rosemary Wolf
Wendy Yap in memory of Dr. Sol
Bassow

**Join us in remembering
the members who
passed away this year:**

**Sol Bassow
Kelsey Hickok
Helen Hondius
Mary McNutt
Frank Shavlik**

**This list includes
all gifts made between
Nov. 7, 2020 through
Nov. 18, 2021**



Estes Valley Land Trust

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\$1 Million Goal Achieved!

Thanks to many of you, the Estes Valley Land Trust's Perpetuity Fund has exceeded \$1 million! Our conservation easements permanently protect land and the Perpetuity Fund is our operating endowment that ensures the land trust operates forever, and can defend each conservation easement in perpetuity.

Our ultimate goal is \$5 million, enough to support the majority of our operating expenses each year, purely from the fund's interest and dividends. Do you want to help us get there? **See evlandtrust.org/donate for more details or to make a restricted gift.**

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Double your impact this CO Gives Day by supporting the Estes Valley Land Trust. **Thanks to a generous donor**, any donations to the land trust on CO Gives Day **will be matched dollar-for-dollar, up to \$10,000**. Once unlocked, this \$10,000 donation will be added to our Land Protection Fund. This fund will strengthen our efforts to conserve and protect more land throughout the Estes Valley.

With your help we can unlock this match and raise a total of \$20,000 for the land trust. In addition, any gift made through ColoradoGives.org on December 7th will be boosted by an additional donation from the Community First Foundation.

To learn more and to donate, search for Estes Valley Land Trust on ColoradoGives.org.