

# Estes Valley Land Trust

SUMMER 2022 Newsletter



Estes Valley Land Trust

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Estes Valley Land Trust

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# Let's Monitor Together!



*Monitoring is a great way to get outside and explore new places.*

The Estes Valley Land Trust is a nationally-accredited and state-certified land trust and annually monitors each conservation easement, totaling nearly 10,000 acres of land! Conservation easements permanently protect land by restricting development, and we are one of the only land trusts in Colorado that depend on an army of volunteers to monitor our easements.

You, our members, deserve the credit for helping us ensure land is preserved forever and that the land trust remains in good standing with state and national agencies. Thank you!

Below are a few common questions we receive each year about our monitoring program.

### What does monitoring an easement entail?

In a nutshell, monitoring a conservation easement involves reviewing materials such as maps and previous monitoring reports, coordinating a site visit with a partner, walking the site, taking photos, completing a report and speaking to our Stewardship Manager. The goal is to visually inspect the site and confirm there are no prohibited uses of the property.

### Do I need any special training or equipment?

The land trust coordinates a monitoring training event each year, before the monitoring season begins. The session

covers our monitoring protocol and expectations and provides all needed materials. The only additional equipment each volunteer needs is a camera or smartphone.

### What if I discover a violation to the conservation easement?

In the past, our volunteers have discovered minor violations on preserved lands, such as motorized use or building materials. It's important to report these uses to the Stewardship Manager immediately so they can contact the landowner and notify them of the violation. This quick notification to the landowner has minimized impacts to the land and prevented long-term damage to the conservation values.

# Summer Breakfasts



July breakfast speakers Lauren Miro (left) and Nelson Holland (right).



August breakfast speakers Jeff Liddle (left) and Mikel Otazua (right).

## Embracing Inclusivity in the Outdoors

### Speakers:

**Lauren Miro**

Founder, Denver Chapter of Fat Girls Hiking

**Nelson Holland**

Outdoor Inclusivity Advocate

### Topic:

Working with historically underserved communities to preserve nature and recreate outdoors.

### When:

8-10 AM, Saturday, July 16

### Where:

High Peak Camp, Salvation Army

### Cost:

\$15/person

## Canine Search and Rescue in Estes

### Speakers:

**Jeff Liddle**

Volunteer, Larimer Search and Rescue

**Mikel Otazua**

K9 Officer, Town of Estes Park

### Topic:

Meet local canines and their trainers that save lives and recover human remains.

### When:

8-10 AM, Saturday August 13

### Where:

Pavilion, Hermit Park Open Space

### Cost:

\$15/person

### Reservations are required for each breakfast.

Breakfast will be catered by Big Horn Restaurant and includes fresh fruit, bacon or sausage, eggs and coffee!

Visit [evlandtrust.org/RSVP](https://evlandtrust.org/RSVP) to register. All events are outdoors. Please bring a chair (at Hermit Park Open Space breakfast only), jacket, sunglasses, hat and sunscreen.



# Estes Valley Land Trust Receives \$189,404 Grant

In March, Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) awarded the Estes Valley Land Trust a major grant to improve stewardship and conserve more land across the Estes Valley. More than 50 public and private entities applied for a GOCO grant and the Estes Valley Land Trust was one of just 13 that received an award.

**"GOCO is proud to support EVLT's capacity to address urgent conservation and stewardship challenges impacting the Estes Valley," said GOCO Executive Director Jackie Miller. "They're putting their strategic planning efforts into action to deepen partnerships, engage communities, and conserve this landscape for future generations. We look forward to the impact it will have for the region's land, wildlife, and people."**

EVLT has become a more strategic organization and developed goals to better directly serve our community, preserve land with the highest conservation values and support landowners as they manage land in a warming and drier climate. **"The GOCO grant validates our hard work and strategic direction and we're excited to get started," said EVLT Executive Director Jeffrey Boring.** The funds will be used for a variety of projects over the next two years.

## Improving Stewardship

A portion of the funds will be used to hire a Stewardship Manager to foster partnerships between our conservation easement landowners and land management agencies. **"Over the last 30 years, we've built trust with dozens of private landowners across the valley and now we have the capacity to better serve them and provide resources that lead to better land management," said Don Smith, President of the Board of Directors.**

Examples of improved land stewardship may include partnering with the Larimer County Weed District to host a workshop and provide discount herbicides, working with the Larimer County Conservation Corps to develop a forest management plan and schedule a saw crew to thin private forest land, or reseeding and reestablishing native plants along an eroded stream bank.

**"While the land trust is known for its conservation efforts, a changing climate, drier forest and invasive weed growth demand that we also develop new partnerships to help steward conserved lands," said Smith.**

## Conserving Land

Now is a critical time to conserve more land in the Estes Valley. The Estes Valley Land Trust and conservation partners across the state have worked with legislators and major funders to provide financial incentives to donate conservation easements and preserve land. The financial incentives have never been better. Today, a landowner can receive up to \$5 million in sellable tax credits for donating a conservation easement.

The Estes Valley Land Trust is currently negotiating easements that buffer Roosevelt National Forest and Rocky Mountain National Park, protect wildlife habitat and historic trails and preserve open space in scenic areas. We also continue to work with a landowner to conserve a site that is sacred to the Arapaho, Cheyenne and other tribes. The stars are beginning to align with the financial incentives and a variety of willing landowners.



*Stream corridors and wetlands are conservation priorities.*

# Diversity and Inclusion Through Conservation

Last year the land trust's Board of Directors adopted eight organizational core values to direct the future of the organization and ensure that we operate effectively and in unison. We encourage our members to hold the staff and Board of Directors accountable to these values. See [www.evlandtrust.org](http://www.evlandtrust.org) for details about each core value.

This summer, we're following through on two of these values ("We Include Everyone" and "We Succeed by Working Together") by hosting the Embracing Inclusivity in the Outdoors breakfast on July 16.

## Why Embrace Inclusivity?

The Estes Valley Land Trust has always emphasized building authentic relationships with people who care about the environment. Today, we also realize the importance of building relationships with others that may live outside our service area or may be part of an underserved group, such as people of color or low-income communities. Historically, these communities have not been invited to actively participate or weren't welcomed in the conservation industry. **"If we're going to be effective in conserving more land, we can't do it alone and we need to build new and lasting relationships with people that have been overlooked,"** said Robin Harding, former President of the Board of Directors.

## What Conservation Organizations Are Doing

Conservation organizations across the country are broadening their goals and taking steps to become more equitable and inclusive. Some land trusts are actively recruiting people of color in their communities to serve as board members, or working with Latinx leaders to host Spanish-speaking tours of conserved properties. In southern Colorado, a land trust is building relationships with Indigenous Tribes and co-designing programming that brings stewardship education and indigenous knowledge together for landowners and the public. **"I see many land trusts taking creative and meaningful steps towards being more inclusive and relevant in their communities,"** said Melissa Daruna, Executive Director of Keep it Colorado, a statewide organization that supports Colorado land trusts.

## What EVLT is Doing

Similar to these organizations, the Estes Valley Land Trust has taken steps to welcome and include members of underserved communities in our work. For example, the Board of Directors is seeking members of the local workforce to serve on the Board and provide leadership. Currently,

only one of our 10 Board members is a member of the local workforce. Our partnership with the Estes Park School District to provide student internships and scholarships may be an opportunity to build a relationship with a teacher or faculty member that results in a Board position.

Additionally, the land trust continues to communicate with Indigenous communities and find projects that amplify our shared values. Conserving lands that are sacred to the Arapaho and Cheyenne and providing opportunities for our members to meet and learn from these tribes are good examples.

Finally, the land trust is known for coordinating educational events to enhance our members' understanding of private lands conservation, wildlife and ecology. In addition, future breakfasts will connect our members to other leaders in the conservation community, such as members of the Latinx community, and provide new opportunities to learn from each other.



*Fat Girls Hiking embraces body positivity in the outdoors.*

## July Breakfast

Join us at our July 16 breakfast at the Salvation Army's High Peak Camp as we meet two individuals with unique perspectives on this issue, so we can learn from their experience and grow as an organization. Both panelists will tell their personal stories and the way they inspire others to get outside and protect the environment. Go to [www.evlandtrust.org/RSVP](http://www.evlandtrust.org/RSVP) to learn more about these speakers and to register for this breakfast.



# Land Trust Sponsors Local Youth Film Festival

This spring the land trust partnered with the Estes Park School District and Bird & Jim to create the Estes Valley Student Nature Film Festival. In total, \$9,000 in scholarships were provided to local graduating seniors who plan to pursue a college degree. Anonymous donors approached the land trust and made restricted donations to support this project.

In order to protect our environment, it's important to encourage young people to get involved in conservation. They are the future CEOs, elected officials, parents and environmental advocates. More than a dozen students wrote, directed, starred-in and recorded seven short films. All seven films focused on the natural environment, threats to our planet and steps we can take to protect nature. All films can be viewed at [www.evlandtrust.org](http://www.evlandtrust.org).

## Award Winners

Third place went to Ella Santagati and Bella Walker, the Directors of the film *Save the Bees!* This film captured the directors' passion for bees, highlights their declining population, and how we can help them recover.

Second place went to *East Troublesome and Cameron Peak Fires* by Sydney Lewelling, Kadynce Shotts, and Lucy Scott. This film tells the story of the two megafires that forced local evacuations and threatened the safety of Estes Park residents.

The grand prize went to Alec Throne's *Fakarava Island Documentary*. This is a beautiful and compelling film that highlights the diverse, yet fragile, coral reef ecosystem.



*Congratulations to all filmamakers!*

# Visiting Students Interview Landowners

Students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in Massachusetts spent seven weeks in Estes Park this spring learning about the Estes Valley Land Trust and studying climate change. Through their research and interviews with landowners, members of the Board of Directors and climate experts, the student team found that temperatures and the frequency and severity of wildfires has increased in the Estes Valley in the last century.

While many landowners practice wildfire mitigation techniques such as forest thinning and trimming of low tree branches, they may not associate these activities with other strategies to mitigate climate change. One of the student team's recommendations is for the land trust to play an active role in educating landowners about land management practices that mitigate climate change.

Thank you to our WPI students and their professors for meeting with representatives of the land trust and researching the nexus between our work and climate change. Project videos and the final report can be found at [www.evlandtrust.org](http://www.evlandtrust.org).



*Left to right: Ryan Weeks, Mark Bibiu, Jade Veth, Sarah Hull, Nupur Shukla*

# Catching Up with Piet Hondius

Piet Hondius, one of the Founders of the Estes Valley Land Trust, still lives in Estes Park and meets with Jeffrey Boring, Executive Director, regularly to discuss conservation and the Estes Valley. Following is a synopsis of one of their recent visits.

## **Hi Piet, how are you feeling?**

Well, for someone who is 99 years old, I guess I'm feeling pretty good. I wear a hearing aid in my left ear and I have trouble seeing but that's par for the course for someone that will be 100 in February. I'm living with some friends, Lisa and Gary, in a house south of the golf course

## **I really appreciate getting to visit with you and learning more about the origin of the land trust. Tell me about some of the people you worked with when you formed the Estes Valley Land Trust.**

Many people helped us during the early years. Jim White was very intelligent and his leadership resulted in many real estate transactions and hundreds of acres of conserved land. Eldon Freudenburg helped conserve the historic homestead on MacGregor Ranch. Seymour Graham, Jim Crain and Leo Weber were also major contributors to the success of the land trust. There were so many people who played a role in the success of the land trust over the years, it's hard to remember them all.

Our community really was "on board" with preserving land and not developing everything.

## **And some of the deals, I'm very familiar with Meadowdale Ranch and the Eagle Rock School. What other conservation easements come to mind?**

MacGregor Ranch. This was our first big project. My grandfather first learned about the ranch as a hunting destination, this is when he met Alexander MacGregor, who homesteaded near Black Canyon in the 1870s. We were concerned this property would be subdivided and developed. The National Park Service was also concerned about the future of the ranch because it was located on the boundary of the Park. I was the President of the Colorado Mountain Club at the time and we worked with The Nature Conservancy, Governor Dick Lamm, US Senators Bill Armstrong and Hank Brown to secure \$4 million from Congress to purchase the development rights and preserve the homestead. This project occurred before the land trust was formed, but gave us the idea that we could use easements to conserve land across the Estes Valley.

## **What was the deal that got away?**

Old Man Mountain. My family spent a lot of time there, I climbed to the top a lot and I remember specifically that my mom would cook potatoes for the family near one of the caves. It's also a site of Native American significance and has been studied by archaeologists for years. After the land trust was formed, there was a plan to build a revolving restaurant on top. I would love to see that property conserved.

## **I've got big shoes to fill, what advice would you give me to keep your vision for the land trust alive and well?**

Keep making deals and working closely with the community. We had a lot of support from the community when I was involved with the land trust and that needs to continue. We also worked closely with the Town of Estes Park and Town Administrator Gary Klaphake. Keep up the good work.



*Piet Hondius, a Founder of EVLT.*

*For more information about the history of the land trust see Rebecca Urquhart's excellent book "10,000 acres on a shoestring: The beginnings of the Estes Valley Land Trust."*



Estes Valley Land Trust

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## Interested in making a planned gift?

Once your loved ones are provided for, giving a planned gift to the land trust is a powerful way to help preserve land forever. Go to [evlandtrust.org/donate](http://evlandtrust.org/donate) for details, or contact the land trust for sample bequest language.



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