

Estes Valley Land Trust

Fall 2022 Newsletter



Estes Valley Land Trust

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Successful Monitoring Season
Land Conservation in Action
Acknowledging Our Donors



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

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Above: Estes Valley Land Trust and partners celebrate the new Thumb Open Space.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

What a memorable year it has been for the Estes Valley Land Trust. One of our signature achievements was the grand opening of the Thumb Open Space. The Thumb Open Space is Estes Park's newest public park and a wonderful example of what we can all achieve by working together for the public good. In June, a "ribbon cutting" ceremony took place, and I was honored to represent the land trust and share the occasion with conservation partners like the Town of Estes Park, Larimer County, Great Outdoors Colorado, the Access Fund and Rocky Mountain Conservancy.

We also hosted many great community events throughout the year, such as breakfasts and hikes on conserved lands and a Student Nature Film Festival where we provided \$8,000 in scholarships to local high school seniors. Our work affects so many people and I'm really proud of the positive impact the Estes Valley Land Trust has throughout the community.

Of course, these achievements would not have been possible without all of you, our dedicated members. To thank you, I would like to invite you to our annual holiday party on Monday, December 5th from 4-6pm. See our announcement on the back cover for more details and I hope you can join us.

Don Smith
EVLTL Board President

SUCCESSFUL MONITORING SEASON COMES TO A CLOSE

Every year the Estes Valley Land Trust's volunteers undertake the massive effort of monitoring our conservation easement properties. This year, over a hundred volunteers monitored nearly 10,000 acres of land.

Our monitors explored montane grasslands full of blooming wildflowers, riparian corridors and steep rock outcrops. Most of these properties are privately owned and a few are owned by our public partners, such as the Town of Estes Park, Larimer County, or the National Park Service.

Our volunteers hiked and created detailed reports of each conserved property, with photographs and maps, to highlight the condition of the property and any potential violations to the conservation easement. We are glad to report that no violations were observed this year! This means there were no prohibited activities such as development outside designated building envelopes.

We also welcomed fifteen new volunteer monitors this season. Recruiting new volunteer monitors helps keep our monitoring program strong. If you have friends who are interested in becoming a monitor next year, please contact us at stewardship@evlandtrust.org. Thanks again for supporting the land trust and our monitoring program. We couldn't do it without all our volunteers.



Volunteers Robin Harding, Carolyn Kramer, and Bob Schorr (left to right) enjoy a beautiful day while monitoring a conservation easement.

MEET HIGH SCHOOL INTERN LAUREL WILLIAMSON

My name is Laurel and I am currently a junior at Estes Park High School and the Estes Valley Land Trust's first high school intern. When I'm not at school, I enjoy being outdoors and swimming competitively. Last year I discovered my passion for biology and the environment, so I was excited when I heard about this internship opportunity. This internship has afforded me the chance to learn more about land conservation and the ins and outs of a nonprofit organization by observing and helping with easement monitoring, event coordination, and nonprofit financial management.

Throughout this experience I have learned and improved many skills including plant identification, GIS mapping, database management, general organization, and various computer skills. This internship has also allowed me to explore potential career interests and fields of study, as I start thinking about college. I am currently planning to attend college and pursue a Bachelor's degree in biology which I am preparing for by taking college classes while in high school. What I have learned during my time at the land trust aligns very closely with a lot of the material that I am currently studying. Overall, I'm very grateful for this opportunity and look forward to supporting the land trust in the future.



Laurel Williamson's internship helps prepare her for college.

NEW LAND CONSERVATION INCENTIVES WORKING

The Estes Valley Land Trust will soon close on two conservation easements that in total protect over 350 acres of land. Both projects have been conservation targets for many years and with the help of Colorado's updated Conservation Easement Tax Credit Program, are becoming a reality.

In 2021, the Estes Valley Land Trust worked with other Colorado land trusts to improve the state's signature land conservation statute: a tax credit program that can be used to offset a conservation easement donor's income taxes for up to 20 years. In Colorado, the tax credit can also be sold. Recently, the tax credit was improved so that the donor can receive 90% of the value of the easement, up to \$5 million.

This improvement in the tax credit program has bolstered land conservation across the state, including in the Estes Valley. **"I worked closely with other land trusts and legislators to pass a bill that provides better incentives for land conservation in Colorado"**, said Jeffrey Boring, Estes Valley Land Trust Executive Director. **"Our state is rapidly developing and we needed stronger financial incentives to protect land."**



Board members, staff and volunteers tour a conservation easement that protects critical wildlife habitat.

Buffering Roosevelt National Forest

Protecting land adjacent to Roosevelt National Forest, Rocky Mountain National Park and other conserved areas has always been a priority for the land trust. Of course, wildlife cross jurisdictional boundaries and development near our parks and open spaces can introduce weeds and other disturbances that impact wildlife and their habitat.

A new conservation easement near Glen Haven is virtually surrounded by Roosevelt National Forest and shares a border, more than two miles in length, with the Forest. The property has a primarily southern exposure and is composed of a ponderosa pine forest, lodgepole pine forest and mixed pine forests. Based on a report from Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the property provides excellent habitat for mountain lion, mule deer, elk and black bear, among other animals.

Buffering Rocky Mountain National Park

The second conservation easement the land trust plans to complete this fall is located in the Tahosa Valley. The property is already protected with a conservation easement and the land trust is working with the donor to strengthen the easement and better protect wildlife habitat.

Historically, this 160-acre property contained an active beaver colony and remnants of beaver ponds are evident today. Although beaver no longer inhabit the property, it provides a wide variety of wildlife habitats including riparian shrublands, wetlands, rock crops, spruce-fir forests, ponderosa woodlands and grasslands.

The existing conservation easement will be amended to limit development to one home and prevent subdivision of the property. Any future development will be restricted to this 3-acre building envelope. That means over 98% of this property will remain open and undisturbed forever.

Learn More

Both of these conservation easements have been in the negotiation phase for more than two years and the recent changes in Colorado's tax credit program helped make them possible. Once the transactions close later this year, we look forward to providing more details and hosting member hikes to see these amazing properties.

SUMMER EVENTS

CONNECT MEMBERS WITH NATURE

For more than 25 years the Estes Valley Land Trust has hosted breakfasts and invited experts to educate our members about wildlife, land conservation, outdoor recreation and other topics. In 2022, we were able to resume these member breakfasts and hikes at beautiful properties conserved by the Estes Valley Land Trust.

Inclusivity and the Outdoors

Our first summer breakfast took place at the High Peak Camp owned by the Salvation Army. The land trust holds a conservation easement on 55 acres of open space near this camp. In July, we partnered with the Rocky Mountain Conservancy to host panelists from minority groups who advocate for outdoor inclusivity through their work in land conservation and recreation. We learned that simple pleasures, like hiking with a friend, aren't available to everyone. Barriers such as the cost to enter parks, transportation limitations or just feeling unsafe outside can keep people from enjoying nature. Mary Lamy, a longtime member of the Estes Valley Land Trust and breakfast attendee said it well: **"These young people opened our eyes and made us more aware of the barriers they face in getting out in the Park and on local trails. Unless they get outside and in nature, they may never care about it."**



The land trust and conservation partners celebrate at a summer breakfast.

Canine Search and Rescue

In August, members gathered at Hermit Park Open Space to meet a couple of outstanding working dogs and their handlers. No offense to Jeff Liddle with Larimer Search and Rescue or Kate Garry, Officer with the City of Loveland, but their dogs Kizzie and Pako stole the show. Highlights included a demonstration by Kizzie, a recovery dog trained to find bodies after floods, fires and other disasters and Pako, a Belgian Malinois, that is trained in patrol and narcotic detection. Both of these dogs and their trainers make recreating outdoors and on public land safer. Thank you Jeff and Kate for sharing your time, talent and sidekicks with the land trust membership.

MEET TIM AND WENDY HAIGHT:



Tim and Wendy's gift sustains the land trust for future generations, like their granddaughter Penelope.

NEW FOREVER ESTES CIRCLE MEMBERS

Q. Tell us about yourselves and your connection with the Estes Valley.

A: My wife and I both vacationed in Estes when we were children, and our parents instilled in us the love and peace we find in the mountains. When our children were younger, we frequently brought them to Estes and Rocky Mountain National Park. Now in retirement, we spend several months of the year here, enjoying what nature has to offer.

Q. You recently joined the Forever Estes Circle by making a planned gift to the land trust. What specifically about a planned gift appeals to you?

A: Through our planned gift, we hope to support sustainability for the land trust and ensure it can continue in perpetuity beyond our lifetimes. We hope this gift helps to ensure that our eight grandchildren—and their children as well—will come to the mountains and find love of nature, peace and contentment.

Q. Can you tell us about the process of making a planned gift?

A: It is an easy process. We discussed our estate plan with our children. They love the mountains and want to ensure that the valley is conserved for their families long into the future. We merely conveyed our wishes to our attorney, who helped complete the paperwork for us.

Q. Anything else you'd like to share about the land trust or your gift?

A: We believe in the land trust's vision and mission and we encourage others to support the land trust with a planned gift. It's simple; and we hope such a gift helps the land trust achieve the same type of sustainability that it endows in creating conservation easements that endure forever.

Thank you to our donors!

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**"Our family has enjoyed the Estes Valley for three generations. We support EVLT out of love for the area and our family."
- Dan and Donna Dilts, Members since 2001.**

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**"I joined EVLT to
be a part of the
preservation of a
such a beautiful
place."**

**-Cassie Vendegna,
Member since 2022.**

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

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Keith Stephenson
Nancy Sweet
David Tavel
Albert Velthoen
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**This list includes all gifts
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ESTES VALLEY LAND TRUST

Holiday Party

Monday, December 5
4-6 pm
Skyview at Fall River Village

Join us as we
celebrate another
great year with
refreshments, project
updates, and great
company

More info and RSVP at
evlandtrust.org/RSVP



COMMUNITY FIRST FOUNDATION

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GIVES DAY 
ColoradoGivesDay.org **Dec. 6**

**UNLOCK A MATCHING
\$15,000 GIFT**

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 \$15,000.**

With your help we can unlock this match and raise a total of **\$30,000** for the land trust. In addition, any gift made through ColoradoGives.org on or before December 6th 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.