

## **Additional section of South Arkansas River restored**

*December 15, 2016* — Central Colorado Conservancy completed another restoration project on the South Arkansas River in Poncha Springs early this month. The project, located upstream of the Highway 285 bridge, is part of our multi-year effort to restore the South Arkansas River from its headwaters near Monarch Pass to its confluence with the Arkansas River.



(caption) Before restoration, a large abandoned beaver dam — already removed — caused water to flow around an island and back up on the property, eroding banks in the large meander. Photo by Jason Willis

The Collegiate Peaks Chapter of Trout Unlimited and National Trout Unlimited were both partners on the project. Restoration encompassed 1,100 feet of the river, bringing the total number of feet restored on the South Arkansas to 2,500.

We have worked with six adjacent landowners located both upstream and downstream of the bridge since completing the first-ever assessment of the river in 2010. Within these projects, 400 native trees and shrubs were planted along the river. The South Arkansas is a major tributary to the Arkansas River and merges with it in the middle of a 103-mile stretch of Gold Medal Trout Waters. In addition to improving the fishery, river restoration improves water quality for municipal and agricultural use.



(caption) After restoration, natural structures help control the river grade between upstream and downstream sections. The river now has a serviceable flood plain that will absorb high flows, and bank erosion is under control. Photo by Jason Willis

This project proved challenging because a large, abandoned beaver dam had rerouted water flow on the property, causing erosion and threatening a structure, National Trout Unlimited Project Manager Jason Willis said.

“With this project not only does the landowner get to fix his property, but we also get to improve the associated ecosystem,” Willis said. “These ecosystem improvements don’t happen with one specific project. It is a culmination of smaller projects that fit together to restore and reconnect the entire watershed.”

Restoration projects also improve vegetation along the banks. Plants filter pollutants out of water run-off before it enters the river, provide stream bank stability, and provide habitat for birds and mammals that use the river corridor for migration and movement. We hold a conservation easement on the property and, as with all of our easements, will monitor it to make sure the land retains its conservation values in perpetuity.

Funding for this project was provided by the Great Outdoors Colorado riparian grant program, the Collegiate Peaks Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Salida Sunrise Rotary, the Upper Arkansas Conservation District, the landowner, and Central Colorado Conservancy.

## **Central Colorado Conservancy thanks our community for Annual Event support**

*November 20, 2016* — Central Colorado Conservancy wants to thank the community for a very successful event in November. We raised \$44,000 for our conservation work in Central Colorado!

We want to thank Mount Princeton Hot Springs Resort, Eddyline Brewery, Arlie Dale's Jug Liquors, and Sweetie's Sandwich Shop for their generous donations. A heart felt thank you to our gold sponsors for their generous support: Allan C. Beezley, PC, Central Colorado Title and Escrow, Marquez and Herrick-Stare, LLC, Pinon Real Estate Group, and Powell & Murphy, PC. Thank you to our silver sponsors: Collegiate Peaks Bank, Colorado Central Magazine, DeLarue Building Company, First Colorado Land Office, Jane B. Fredman, LLC, HydroGEO Designs, LLC, Michael D. Scott, Attorney, Timberline Partners, and Vely Agency, LLC. Thank you to our individual sponsors: John Andrick, Denny Arter, Dick Cuyler, Mary Cuyler, Dennis Kist, Dan Larkin, Kate Larkin, Tim Martin, Ann Mason, Gary Mason, Linda Mulka, Robert Sander, Cliff Wurster, and Doris Wurster.

That night we were able to auction off 55 items, raising money for conservation easements, ecological restoration, stewardship and education programs. This was thanks to: Tomichi Lodge, High Country News, The Pilates Studio, Dick Cuyler, Mary Cuyler, Samar Fay, Lisa Marvel, Svata Louda, Rod Otley, Cindy Williams, Brad Leach, Lee Coveney, Dan Smith, Clear Creek Ranch, Hayden Mellsop, Chaco, Oswald Cattle Company, The Lost Wonder Hut, Salida Mountain Sports, Mt. Shavano Ski Shop, Natural Habitat Adventure, Monarch Mountain, Denver Art Museum, Lucy Waldo, Royal Gorge Railroad, Georgetown Loop Railroad, Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, Orient Land Trust, Dove Graphics, Dvorak Rafting and Kayak Expeditions, Adidas Outdoor, The Yoga Tonic, Mount Princeton Hot Springs Resort, Marsha Brown, Icelantic, D&J Rare Gems, Pioneer Wine, GIRO, Therm-A-Rest, Mountain Hardware, Dynafit, Spirit Mountain, Eagle Optics, Mary Anne Mills, Murdoch's Ranch and Home Supply, Wood's High Mountain Distillery, Carol Cartwright, Tim Kennedy, Central Colorado Conservancy Board of Directors, Fred Rasmussen, Jeanne and Randy Herrick-Stare, Hodgepodge, Arc'Teryx, Leopold Bros Distillery, Boathouse Distillery, Cascade Designs, Suunto, Dana and Keith Ladzinski, Intentions Spa, Simple Foods Market, and Souled Out T-Shirts.

The event would not have been possible without the work of Central Colorado Conservancy staffer Julie Richardson. Our sincere appreciation to the volunteers who made the event run smoothly, including: Marsha Brown, Dori Denning, Carol DeStefanis, Michael Fischer, Janet Franz, Jeanne Herrick-Stare, Rebecca Hinds, Hayden Mellsop, Hallie Bare Mahowald, Susan Nies, Terry Peterson, John Russell, Michael Scott, and Cindy Williams. Our gratitude to Jerry Tinianow, Chief Sustainability Officer for City and County of Denver for his presentation during the event. Finally, congratulations to Fred Rasmussen recipient of our Conservationist Award for his life time of dedicated work on behalf of the natural world.

During the event, we outlined our plans for the future. Please continue reading the story below for more details. Thank you!

## **LTUA becomes Central Colorado Conservancy and sets new goals to triple its rate of conservation**



*November 18, 2016* — The Land Trust of the Upper Arkansas changed its name to Central Colorado Conservancy, the nonprofit announced at its Annual Event and Fundraiser on Thursday, Nov. 17, 2016.

The change is the result of a year-long strategic planning process that identified growing threats to conservation in the region, such as Colorado’s population projections, disappearing agricultural lands and water diversions to the Front Range, Executive Director Andrew Mackie said.

“Our members have told us that our most important goal is to preserve land for agriculture, wildlife habitat, views, and our sense of place — the qualities that make this region special,” Mackie said at the event attended by more than 150 people at Mount Princeton Hot Springs Resort. “Our 10-year plan aims to help do that, and our new name and logo will support the plan.”

The organization’s 14-member board of directors completed the planning process by conducting a membership survey, holding multiple focus groups and hiring Buena Vista-based Arkansas Valley Designs to direct the re-branding process and design the new logo.

“This was an in-depth assessment of our organization and evaluation of the trends that will impact our region,” Mackie said. “The result is a refined vision and mission, a commitment to protect 20,000 additional acres of land, and other goals that will triple our rate of conservation in the next decade.”

The organization reported Thursday that 35 percent of the region's agricultural lands have disappeared since the 1980s. Some of these lands are purchased for development or water rights that are then diverted to Front Range cities.

"Across our service area today, more than 8 billion gallons of water that used to be dedicated for agriculture is transferred every year to Front Range cities for municipal use," Mackie said.

Through conservation easements, the land trust works to protect wildlife habitat, keep healthy waters in the region, and preserve the open lands the community enjoys.

"If Colorado's population doubles by 2050, Central Colorado will continue to see more residents and visitors," Mackie said. "That is good for our economy but clearly, now is the time to act to preserve our special places and resources."

Mackie said the organization's goals include restoring an additional four miles of waterways and planting 50,000 trees and shrubs through its restoration programs, as well as engaging 3,000 community participants annually and doubling its membership and volunteers to connect people to the region's natural and agricultural lands.

The land trust was established 15 years ago in response to growing development pressures in the Upper Arkansas River Valley. Its first project preserved 600 acres near the Game Trail subdivision northwest of Buena Vista. The land agreement protected an important migration route and winter habitat for the American elk herd that continues to use the area today.

Since its inception, Central Colorado Conservancy has helped protect and restore 10,000 acres in its five-county service area of Chaffee, Lake, Park, Fremont and Saguache counties. It holds more than 30 conservation easements and owns two properties.

Projects include protecting the headwaters of the Arkansas River in Lake County, mountain biking trails near Salida, and a wildlife corridor on top of Poncha Pass, among many others.

Along with the new name, the organization rewrote its tagline to, "Protecting the land and waters that sustain us," and created a colorful logo depicting mountains, habitat, agriculture and clean water.

## **Central Colorado Conservancy receives accreditation certificate at national conference**



(caption) Board Member Jeanne Herrick-Stare receives our accreditation certificate at the National Land Trust Conference in Minneapolis.

Central Colorado Conservancy received its accreditation certificate at the National Land Trust Conference in Minneapolis in late October, 2016.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission awarded us accreditation, signifying its confidence that Central Colorado Conservancy lands will be protected forever.

Accredited land trusts across the country have permanently conserved more than 15 million acres of farms, forests and natural areas that are vital to healthy, vibrant communities.

Central Colorado Conservancy joins the 342 land trusts across the country that demonstrate their commitment to professional excellence through accreditation, helping to maintain the public's trust in their work.

## **Trail crews improve Salida's downtown Monarch Spur Trail**

Work on Salida's popular Monarch Spur Trail is well underway this summer, as trail crews from the Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC) arrived and began pulling weeds and planting native vegetation at the end of June.

The Salida Trail Ecological Restoration Project (STERP) is a partnership among Central Colorado Conservancy, Salida-area Parks, Open-space and Trails (SPOT), the Greater Arkansas River Nature Association (GARNA), and the City of Salida and Chaffee County.



(caption) On the second day working on Salida’s Monarch Spur Trail system, SCC trail crew member Zeke Zeff digs down into the roots of teasel, then removes and tosses the plant into a pile.

During their first four-day “hitch” in June, the SCC trail crew pulled cheatgrass, teasel, mullein and Canada thistle from First to Fifth streets in downtown Salida, and on the Milk Run Trail further west. These plants are noxious weeds that proliferate quickly and crowd out native vegetation.

The trail crew also planted a stormwater mitigation wetland in front of the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area visitor center on West Sackett Avenue. The wetland includes plants that will filter stormwater runoff coming down H Street and other streets in big rain events, cleaning the water in Ditch Creek before it enters the Gold Medal waters of the Arkansas River. Many wetland plants are known for taking up pollutants to improve water quality. One plant the SCC crew added, the Blue Flag Iris, might have the ability to kill waterborne viruses.

The trail crew also planted a new habitat “island” between First and Second streets that includes Rocky Mountain juniper, Western sagebrush, rabbitbrush and Apache plum. These trees and shrubs will provide new habitat for birds, food for insect pollinators (especially native bees), and create a screen of native vegetation to help prevent weeds from spreading back along the trail.

Finally, the crew weeded, seeded, mulched and added native wildflower seed to existing habitat islands that have been planted over the past three summers on the trail system.

Central Colorado Conservancy received a grant from the Colorado Garden Foundation this year to support STERP. The grant includes nearly \$7,000 for the cost of native trees, shrubs, grass seed and tools. The City of Salida received \$39,000 from the state’s Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grant program to pay for SCC trail crews.

With an office in Salida, the SCC operates conservation service programs in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico that help people positively impact communities and the environment by working on local public land issues.



(caption) Aleksandra Swieton crossed Ditch Creek to take a moment to interact with the local animal population. The Chicagoan said she learned about plant identification and the local ecology while gaining an appreciation for Colorado’s natural beauty during her time in Salida.

SCC trail crew member Aleksandra Swieton said she not only learned about ecology and the importance of water rights during her work here in June, but also gained a general appreciation for the state of Colorado and its beauty. The 22-year-old Chicagoan said she is interested in a career in permaculture and wants to some day be a farmer.

Trail crew members attended educational programs organized by project partner leaders, for example to gain insight about how to track the reduction of weeds over time. GARNA Program Coordinator Dominique Naccarato gave a Power Point presentation on how GPS programs can be used to help track success through projects such as STERP.

Central Colorado Conservancy's Executive Director Andrew Mackie discussed his career working for land trusts and the National Audubon Society, impressing upon the young adults how volunteering in the natural resources field can help start their careers.

SCC crews will continue working on the Monarch Spur Trail in July and September.

In July, a crew encompassing local high school students will receive intensive educational lessons on ecological functions, weed identification and safe removal, proper planting techniques, and bird and insect identification, while focusing their work along the Striker Trail.

The high school student crew will also participate in a discussion with Central Colorado Conservancy, GARNA, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife professionals to understand what careers might be available to them in conservation and resource management.



(caption) After cutting Canada thistle, STERP Project Coordinator Buffy Lenth sprays the stem with common vinegar to prevent the noxious weed from regrowing.

STERP also is receiving a lot of help from a group of residents who are volunteering to remove weeds and plant native vegetation along the Monarch Spur Trail, according to STERP Project Coordinator Buffy Lenth, who was hired by Central Colorado Conservancy through a grant provided by SPOT, to organize trail work this summer.

“We are really capitalizing on the momentum and enthusiasm among this group of locals to do more plantings along the trail this summer,” Lenth said.

The Monarch Spur and associated trails include two-and-a-half miles of paved pathway that connect Salida’s residential areas to downtown and additional business services on Highway 50. The pathway is popular with bicyclists, pet-walkers and everyone who chooses to get around town under their own power, rather than driving cars. It passes an elementary school, the community garden, and the dog park.

The trail, originally an old railroad bed, is owned by the City of Salida. It has an overabundance of noxious invasive plants, which crowd out native vegetation and make it difficult for insect pollinators to survive.



(caption) SCC trail crew members Reena Lam, left, and Natalie Allen pull weeds from the side of the Milk Run Trail west of downtown Salida.

Through weed removal and planting habitat “islands” along the trail, STERP project partners envision a long, ecologically diverse setting along the length of the trail. Native vegetation adds interest for trail users while benefitting wildlife such as birds and small mammals. As new trees grow, they will shade Ditch Creek, which parallels sections of the trail, and improve water quality for wildlife and human use.

If you are interested in becoming a STERP volunteer, please contact Buffy Lenth at [STERPcoordinator@ltua.org](mailto:STERPcoordinator@ltua.org).

## **Central Colorado Conservancy receives nearly \$83,000 in grants**

*GOCO funding will help protect property on the South Arkansas and Arkansas rivers and keep conserved lands in agriculture*

Central Colorado Conservancy received \$82,540 in grants from the state's Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) program during its most recent funding cycle. Money will support three important Central Colorado Conservancy projects — two focused on protecting property on the region's largest rivers, and a third for determining how to keep preserved lands in agriculture.

Under GOCO's conservation easement transaction costs program, Central Colorado Conservancy received \$34,500 for the Bender Conservation Easement to conserve approximately 86 acres along the South Arkansas River in Poncha Springs. Protecting this property on the "Little River" will provide improved agricultural and municipal water supply, sustain wildlife populations, and support a historic ranching operation. The conservation easement will prevent development, support local agriculture, and protect views from the Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byway and from the Rainbow Trail.

Central Colorado Conservancy also received a \$40,400 transaction costs grant for the 50-acre Wichmann property on the Arkansas River.



(caption) The Wichmann Property preserves scenic views for rafters and anglers.



(caption) The Land Trust received a \$40,000 grant to help protect the Wichmann Property.

This project north of Buena Vista protects scenic views for rafters and anglers, as well as motorists on the Collegiate Peaks Scenic and Historic Byway along Highway 24. Protecting the property will also conserve important riparian and wetland habitat and protect critical migration routes for wildlife.

Central Colorado Conservancy also received a \$7,640 conservation excellence grant from GOCO to support our project that is focused on keeping conserved land in farming and ranching.

This project determines how to keep lands in agriculture to create food, jobs, and ecological benefits for Colorado.

“Agriculture is a needed part of our local economy and protecting this resource is a benefit for all our residents by helping to maintain our food security, heritage, and landscape,” Central Colorado Conservancy Executive Director Andrew Mackie said.

A total of \$20.7 million in GOCO grants was awarded to protect 19 miles of rivers and streams, build school playgrounds, and conserve nearly 40,000 acres of land across the state. A portion of Colorado Lottery proceeds fund the GOCO grant program, which was created when voters approved a Constitutional Amendment in 1992. GOCO has since funded more than 4,700 projects in urban and rural areas in all 64 counties without any tax dollar support.