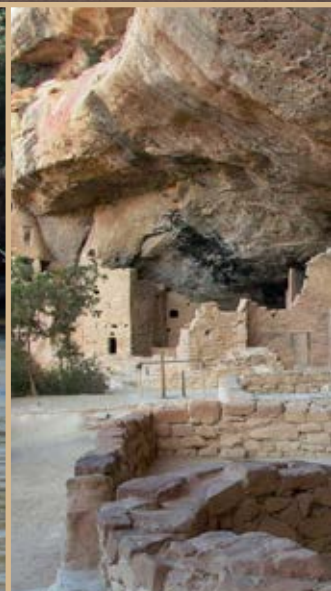


COLORADO'S GREAT OUTDOORS



The Land
and Water
Conservation
Fund in
Colorado



“The land and water conservation bill assures our growing population that we will begin, as of this day, to acquire on a pay-as-you-go basis the outdoor recreation lands that tomorrow’s Americans will require.”

President Lyndon B. Johnson

“Over its 50 year history LWCF has conserved iconic landscapes in every state and is our nation’s most important conservation program.”

US Senator Cory Gardner

COLORADO BY THE NUMBERS:

\$239 million	LWCF funding Colorado has received over last 50 years
\$34.5 billion	Generated through outdoor recreation in Colorado, annually**
\$4.9 million	State and local tax revenue produced by outdoor recreation in Colorado, annually**
313,000	Coloradoans employed in the outdoor recreation industry**
66	Percent of Coloradoans recreate outdoors at least once a week**
90	Percent of Coloradoans participate in some form of outdoor recreation at least once a year**
2.2 million	People hunt, fish, or wildlife watch in Colorado, annually
18,693	Number of jobs in hunting and fishing industry in Colorado
4	Percent of gross state product is attributed to outdoor sales, annually
\$61 million	LWCF money spent in Colorado on state and local parks over last 50 years
\$1.4 million	LWCF funds spent in Colorado to protect endangered species *
10,572	Acres opened to sportsmen since 2011 through LWCF investments*
\$25 million	LWCF funds invested in Colorado to conserve working forest through Forest Legacy Program (FLP) over last 50 years
1	Number of times the LWCF has fully been funded since it was created in 1965

*Headwater Economics

**Colorado Parks and Wildlife (Colorado’s Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP))

All other figures come from LWCF Coalition





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COLORADO'S GREAT OUTDOORS

The Land and Water Conservation Fund in Colorado

Outdoor recreation is a fundamental part of Colorado's economy and its citizens' way of life. Whether fly fishing gold medal waters along the Upper Colorado, or skiing in our famed mountains, access to public lands is essential. For the past 50 years, a relatively unknown federal program, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has been supporting local communities, increasing public access to the outdoors, and preserving wild places in the state.

In 1964 Congress created the LWCF as a bipartisan commitment to protect natural resources, cultural heritage and to provide recreation opportunities throughout the United States. The funds are generated annually from \$900 million in royalties paid by energy companies from offshore drilling. The program uses proceeds from developing one public resource to fund reinvestment into other public natural resources.

There are two main programs within LWCF. One is the Federal Land Protection Program, which helps to permanently protect public land such as Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park. The other is the State Assistance Program, which provides matching grants to help states and local communities protect recreation resources and parks, cultural heritage sites, and working landscapes.

Although LWCF is broadly supported by the public, it has almost never been fully funded. Federal budgets routinely divert offshore royalties to uses other than land and water conservation. LWCF has only been fully funded once in its 50 year history, and has never been adjusted for inflation.

Coloradoans are very supportive of the LWCF, with 77 percent, the highest of any state, in support of reauthorizing and fully funding the program. Further, residents recognize that these lands belong to everyone, with 72 percent saying that public lands are American places, as opposed to just Colorado places.*

Colorado, like other states, has benefited immensely from the LWCF, with the program supporting a wide range of projects across the state, including:

- Developing community parks and trails, like Cherry Creek State Park and Animas River Trail
- Preserving cultural heritage sites like Mesa Verde NP, Canyons of the Ancients NM, and Sand Creek Massacre NHS
- Conserving family ranches (like the Golden Bair) and working timberlands through conservation easements and the forest legacy program
- Preserving iconic landscapes like the Great Sand Dunes
- Securing boating and angling access along rivers including the Colorado, Big Thompson and Yampa

From providing improved angling and hunting access – to securing at-risk inholdings within federal public lands – to supporting local park development, the LWCF's benefits are as diverse as they are significant. This report offers case studies that reflect that diversity, helping tell the story of how LWCF has made a difference for Colorado's public lands and outdoor recreation.

After 50 years of success, the LWCF's original authorization comes to a close at the end of September 2015. The future of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the country, will be on the line as Congress considers a reauthorization vote to extend the program beyond its 2015 sunset. The future of Colorado's multi-billion recreation economy and our quality of life are on the line.

*Source: Colorado College State of Rockies Poll

ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF LWCF

The Land and Water Conservation Fund has been shown to have a significant positive economic impact on communities where funds were used. The Trust for Public Land conducted a comprehensive study recently that placed the return on investment for LWCF funds at 1:4. That is, for every \$1 of LWCF funds invested, \$4 of economic value is generated.

The LWCF also has a significant impact on rural communities that are usually intimately tied to the land surrounding them, with public lands supporting much-needed job growth in these areas.

Percent Change in Employment, Western Non-Metro Counties, 1970 – 2010

% of County Lands Federally Protected

MORE THAN 30% PROTECTED

350%

MORE THAN 20% PROTECTED

297%

MORE THAN 10% PROTECTED

108%

0% PROTECTED

83%

0% 50% 100% 150% 200% 250% 300% 350%



BIG THOMPSON RIVER

Assisting with Flood Recovery Securing Angling Access

In 1976 the rains began to pour near Estes Park, Colorado and caused one of the biggest natural disasters in Colorado's history. A remarkable 12 inches of rain fell in about four hours, bringing the Big Thompson River to 19 feet above its normal level and sending some 31,000 cubic feet per second of water racing downstream – carrying with it anything and everything in its path. The flood claimed 145 lives, 418 homes, 52 businesses and caused about \$35 million in damages (1976 dollars).

In the aftermath of the disaster, Larimer County recognized that simply rebuilding new homes in harm's way within the floodway didn't make sense. In looking for an appropriate way to compensate displaced families while also promoting other public benefits, the County turned to the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) as an important part of its solution. With just over \$1 million from LWCF as well as other matching resources, the County acquired 80 key properties along the Big Thompson – helping provide closure and compensation to families who had lost their homes while

providing new outdoor recreation opportunities to residents and visitors on 156 acres of land along the river highlighted by four new county parks (Glade Park, Narrows, Forks, and Sleepy Hollow). In the years thereafter, the parks proved popular for sightseers, picnickers and anglers who recognize the Big Thompson Canyon as one of the best fishing destinations along the Front Range because of its outstanding wild trout fishery.

When disastrous floods returned to the Big Thompson in 2013, the wisdom of the County's actions in using LWCF to help protect a floodplain was made apparent, as an additional \$16 million in estimated property damages were avoided that would have resulted to homes had they been rebuilt on the floodway properties. LWCF's investment not only provided extensive public recreation benefits at the county park facilities for decades following the 1976 disaster, but helped avert millions of dollars of additional damages in the 2013 floods.

LWCF AND THE BIG THOMPSON FLOODS

LWCF Dollars Invested (1976) in Acquisitions:	\$1,012,600
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Local Matching Dollars Provided:	\$1,012,600
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Home Sites Purchased in Floodplain:	80
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Acres Acquired:	156
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Public Angling Days/Year Provided (per county plan):	200,000
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Value of Home Losses Averted in 2013:	\$16,000,000
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(US Department of Defense)

SUPPORTING FLOOD-DAMAGED COMMUNITIES

Just as LWCF funds played an important role following the 1976 Big Thompson flood, it is also supporting recovery following Colorado's disastrous 2013 flooding. The small Town of Lyons was hit particularly hard by flooding coming down the North and South forks of St Vrain Creek. The level of damage was enormous. In the early hours of September 12, 2013, stream flows in town crested above 19,500 CFS - compared to the normal St Vrain average flow in September of only 67 CFS. The town sustained flood damages totaling nearly \$50 million - a staggering amount for a community that normally operates on an annual budget of less than \$1 million.

The floods decimated the Town's park system, an important part of its tourism and recreation economy.

Out of 80 acres of community parkland, 39 acres were severely impacted. Unfortunately, those 39 acres housed most of the major park facilities including the popular St Vrain Corridor Trail.

An LWCF award via Colorado's State Trails Program, leveraged with other matching funds, will help Lyons to rebuild and extend the St Vrain Corridor Trail. The nearly 1.7 mile trail will provide recreational access along the St Vrain through Lyons and offer connections to regional trails to Boulder and to Longmont. The restoration efforts are important not only to quality of life for residents, but in supporting the community's recreation economy: Lyons' parks can draw some 2000 people on a typical summer weekend.



“These funds are critical in our flood recovery efforts; now we can move forward on permanent structures that will bring folks back.”

David Cosgrove,
Lyons Park &
Recreation Director

(US Department of Defense)



(US Department of Defense)





CANYONS OF THE ANCIENTS

- Most archaeologically dense area in the United States, with 100+ sites per square mile
- Over 6,000 archaeological sites identified, with an estimated 20,000-30,000 still to be discovered
- Is over 173,000 acres, with many acres of inholdings still existing
- There have been 15 LWCF acquisitions since 2000
- Over 10,000 acres added to the Monument, using \$8.8 million in LWCF funds, since 2000





CANYONS OF THE ANCIENTS

Preserving Cultural Heritage and Historic Sites

Riparian Habitat Protection

Conserving Working Landscapes

Situated in southwest Colorado, just north and west of the famous Mesa Verde National Park, lies the most archaeologically dense site in the United States. Encompassing more than 173,000 acres, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument is one of the most important cultural heritage areas in the country.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) notes that people have been occupying this area for approximately 10,000 years, influencing the landscape throughout that time. The archaeological sites in the area include cliff dwellings, agriculture plots, ancient water infrastructure, great kilns, and many petroglyphs and pictographs.

Throughout the past fifteen years, Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) have been used to acquire lands adjacent to, and within, the Monument's boundary – a critical step in preserving these sites.

After designation of monument status in 2000, the BLM, and partners like The Conservation Fund and Trust for Public Lands, began the process of acquiring inholdings from willing sellers within the Monument's boundary. With thousands of acres

still private property, acquiring these lands was key in ensuring preservation of historical sites.

However, the BLM has recognized that the families that have lived on these lands for generations are some of the best stewards of the land. Using LWCF funds to acquire conservation easements has kept more than a thousand acres of land to remain in these families hands, while also guaranteeing the preservation of important archaeological sites.

The most recent LWCF land acquisition added four parcels, totaling 1,563 acres of inholdings to the Monument, and was completed using \$1.7 million in LWCF funds. It protects 40 identified archaeological sites with the potential of more to be discovered, while also preserving a delicate ecosystem along a rare perennial stream in this arid country, Yellow Jacket Creek.

References: BLM, LWCF



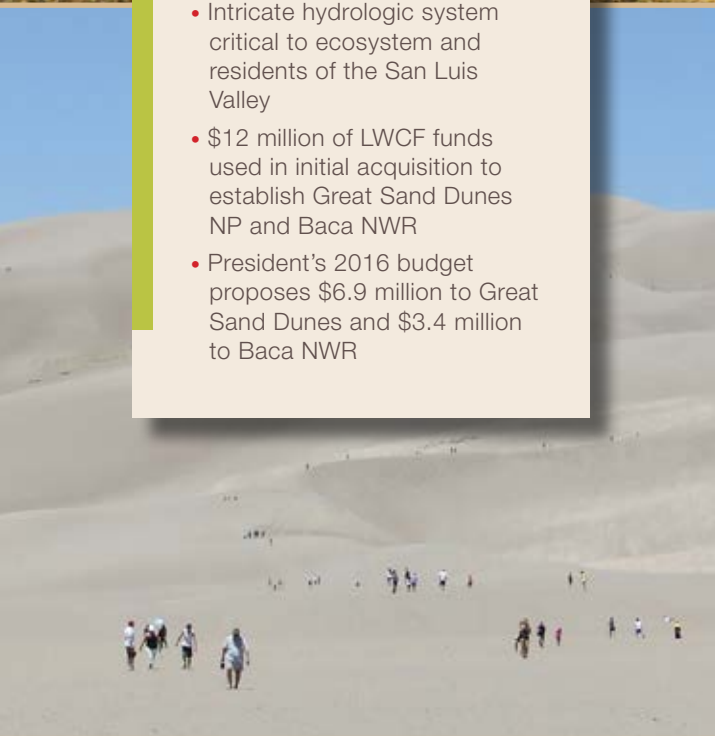
*Canyons of the Ancients photos by
Bob Wick, BLM California.*



GREAT SAND DUNES

- Largest sand dunes in North America
- Home to 8 species of insects found nowhere else in the world
- Diverse landscape including sub-alpine mountain areas and low-lying wetlands
- Intricate hydrologic system critical to ecosystem and residents of the San Luis Valley
- \$12 million of LWCF funds used in initial acquisition to establish Great Sand Dunes NP and Baca NWR
- President's 2016 budget proposes \$6.9 million to Great Sand Dunes and \$3.4 million to Baca NWR

National Park Service, David Nickum.





GREAT SAND DUNES NATIONAL PARK AND BACA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Protecting Iconic Landscapes
Securing Key Habitat for Unique Fish and Wildlife
Community-Driven Vision for Local Lands

President Herbert Hoover designated the Great Sand Dunes a national monument in 1932, but it would take nearly 70 years for the land to be recognized as a national park following the acquisition of the Baca Ranch. The effort in 1932, as well as the one 70 years later, were both direct results of grassroots efforts taken by residents of the San Luis Valley who recognized the unique landscape and the need to preserve it.

The Great Sand Dunes, Baca National Wildlife Refuge, and the adjacent public lands have benefited from Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) in the past, and could potentially benefit from them again if the program continues. LWCF funds were critical in the initial acquisition of the Baca Ranch for the creation of the national park and preserve. Furthermore, Great Sand Dunes, Baca NWR, and the surrounding public lands have inholdings throughout the area, making management sometimes difficult because of the noncontiguous land pattern. LWCF funds have been used in the past to acquire some of these inholdings, easing management headaches and preserving this unique ecosystem.

The area has also been threatened by potential development and water projects. Specifically, large scale projects were proposed that would pump groundwater to either Front Range cities or New Mexico. These projects would directly harm the fragile ecosystem of the dunes, while also threatening rural communities and quality of life in the San Luis Valley.

Furthermore, Medano Creek and Sand Creek within the boundary of the dunes are home to native Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout, a Species of Special Concern in Colorado. By using LWCF funds to preserve and protect these lands, a sanctuary has been created that will hopefully allow these trout populations to grow. Following the acquisition, the Park Service is now working toward an ambitious restoration program that would create a well-protected stronghold for native trout in the remote and scenic Sand Creek watershed.

References: National Park Service, Department of Interior, Red Lodge Clearinghouse



COMMUNITY VISION

“Buying the Baca Ranch and adding it to the Great Sand Dunes was not an idea of the federal government. It was a grassroots movement. The people of the valley started it.”

Ralph Curtis, former
General Manager of
Rio Grande Water
Conservation District





OPHIR VALLEY

Preserving Backcountry Recreation Protecting Habitat for At-Risk Species

Residents of Ophir, Colorado pride themselves on the beauty and backcountry accessibility of their rural community. Situated in the San Juan Mountains just south of Telluride, the Ophir Valley offers premier backcountry skiing and outdoor recreation opportunities, while also providing a home to a diversity of wildlife.

For many years, Ophir Valley residents, along with the Trust for Public Land (TPL), have been working to secure lands within the valley that were not part of the surrounding Uncompahgre National Forest. These inholdings had previously been old mining claims that were dispersed throughout the valley. Acquiring these lands was critical to prevent the development of the backcountry for cabins and second homes, sprawling development which can damage water sources, wildlands, and make wildfire mitigation difficult.

In 2009, TPL was able to purchase these lands to guarantee protection while the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) sought funding to acquire them. In 2014, through a collaborative effort among

the USFS, TPL, Ophir Valley residents, and elected officials the final parcels of land were acquired, permanently preserving this wilderness for the enjoyment of visitors and residents alike.

The final phase of the project, completed in 2014, utilized \$1.5 million in Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) funding to add 1,145 acres of prime backcountry lands to the Uncompahgre National Forest. Through all phases of the project, it could not have been a reality without funding from the LWCF.

Completion of the Ophir Valley land acquisition ensures continued protection of this mountain ecosystem, including the headwaters of Howard's Fork which runs into the San Miguel, one of the last untamed rivers in Colorado, and recognized as a premier trout fishing destination. It enhances backcountry accessibility for all activities and for residents and visitors alike.

References: TPL

OPHIR VALLEY

- Home to endangered species: Uncompahgre Fritillary butterfly and Canadian Lynx
- Secures protection of key riparian areas, including Howard's Fork watershed
- 1,145 acres added to Uncompahgre National Forest for future protection
- Preserves backcountry recreation
- Reclaims old mining claims to prevent backcountry sprawl and preserve backcountry recreation



“To get these mining claims into public land ownership will protect important riparian areas, animal habitat and plants, as well as the rural nature of Ophir.”

Joan May, San Miguel County Commissioner

U. S. Forest Service.



Bob Wick, BLM California.



CROSS MOUNTAIN CANYON RANCH

Keeping Public Lands Public
Endangered Species Habitat Protection
Hunting and Angling Access and Fish and Game Habitat

Cross Mountain Canyon Ranch lies along the Yampa River at the entrance of a beautiful, steep-walled gorge. The 920 acre ranch is surrounded by over 88,000 acres of public lands, including the Bureau of Land Management's Cross Mountain Canyon Wilderness Study Area, which is home to one of the largest migratory Rocky Mountain elk herds in the Lower 48. This 2.8 mile reach of the Yampa also supports four species of endangered warm water fish – the Colorado pikeminnow, razorback sucker, bonytail and humpback chub.

The area is a sportsmen's paradise, with prime fishing and some of the best big game hunting in the state. Furthermore, the class IV-V whitewater that runs through the canyon provides rafters and kayakers with one of the best rides in the state. However, public access had previously been limited because of the ranch, a private inholding.

Recognizing the importance of preserving and increasing access for the area, the Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) purchased the land in 2012. In 2013, using Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF), the BLM was able to acquire the land from the WRC, permanently conserving this spectacular landscape.

Cross Mountain Canyon exemplifies how LWCF funds can be used to acquire targeted properties that not only provide direct benefits, but open up sportspeople's access to vast areas of adjacent public lands.

References: BLM, WRC, LWCF



“Our conservation work at Cross Mountain Canyon Ranch ensures this incredible area will be open to hunters, anglers, boaters, hikers and anyone else who wants to explore this unique and rugged landscape.”

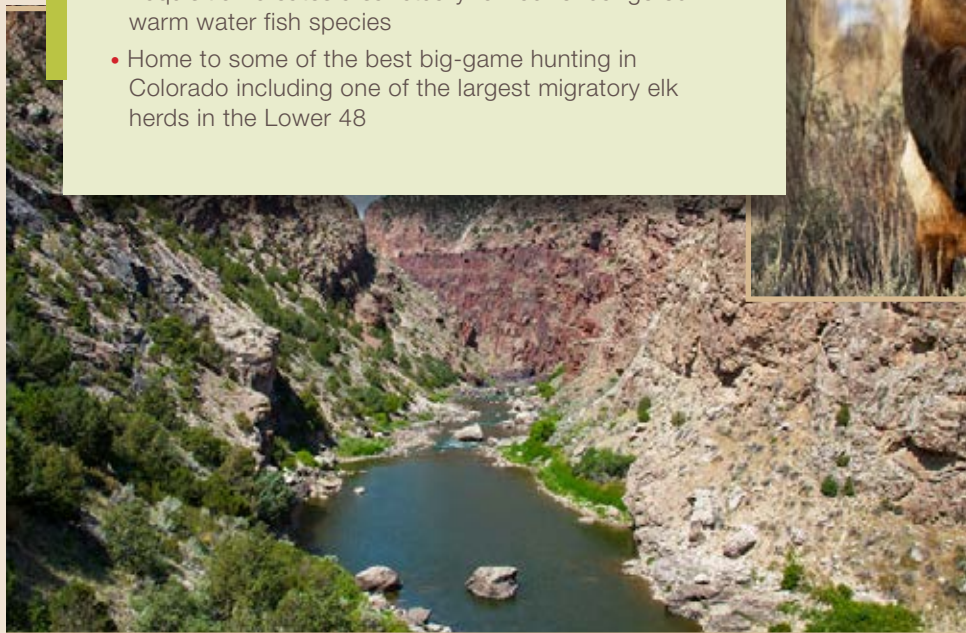
Sue Doroff, president of the WRC





CROSS MOUNTAIN CANYON RANCH

- Critical wildlife habitat and public access secured with guaranteed access for hunting and fishing
- Acquisition opened tens of thousands of acres of land that was previously difficult to access
- LWCF funds secured critical 920 acres surrounded by another 88,000 acres of public land
- 2.8 miles of river frontage opened on the Yampa River
- Acquisition creates a sanctuary for four endangered warm water fish species
- Home to some of the best big-game hunting in Colorado including one of the largest migratory elk herds in the Lower 48



*Cross Mountain
Canyon Ranch photos
courtesy WRC.*

ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING FOR KIDS

Connecting Kids with the Great Outdoors Providing Urban Parklands

Environmental education and outdoor recreation for youth are key in promoting their physical and mental well-being, but many kids in urban communities have little access to open spaces. Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK) has been working since 2006 to provide a diverse group of underserved students' opportunities to experience nature, science, and the outdoors in ways they may never have.

In 2012, ELK's directors conceived of an urban open-space that would also act as a nature and science education center for the kids in their program. In partnership with the Trust for Public Land and the City and County of Denver, ELK was able to purchase a 5.5 acre parcel in the highly developed Montbello neighborhood of Denver, with the vision of creating the ELK Education Center.

The ELK Education Center campaign was able to meet its fundraising goals and begin development with the help of a \$250,000 Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Legacy

Grant in 2015. This was the first year of disbursement of LWCF Legacy Grant Program funds, which focuses directly on developing outdoor recreation opportunities in urban areas.

The LWCF grant awarded to ELK will be used to directly develop the 4.5 acres that will be used as open-space, while the other 1 acre will be used to create an education center building. The open-space is planned to be changed into a native shortgrass prairie, with several nature play areas to simulate the natural outdoors that many kids have never been able to experience. It will also feature outdoor classrooms, walking trails, and possible water features to educate on water quality.

The ELK Education Center will be a place for urban kids to get their first taste of the outdoors. It will also provide the whole community with a space for active outdoor recreation in an area where previous access to open-space was very limited.

References: ELK, LWCF

ELK EDUCATION CENTER

- Received \$250,000 from first ever disbursement of LWCF Legacy Grant Program money
- Helps develop open-space park and education center in underserved area of Denver
- Site will be used as nature, science, and outdoor education center for urban youth
- Colorado was one of 8 states to receive first LWCF Legacy Grant
- Following completion of the project, an estimated 40,000 youth and families will be served each year through educational programs and outdoor activities.



“Funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund is essential to move our project forward, which will bring much needed open space to far northeast Denver and provide daily opportunities for healthy, active recreation through play, learning, science exploration, and stewardship for children, young adults and the entire northeast Denver community.”

Loretta Piñeda, ELK's Executive Director



Photos courtesy ELK.



GOLDEN BAIR RANCH

Preserving ranching heritage
Providing angling and boating access

The Golden Bair Ranch is one of the oldest working sheep ranches in the area, dating back to the early 1900's. Thanks to the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) the ranch is still in operation today and will be a protected working landscape for generations to come.

Situated along the ever growing I-70 corridor between Vail and Glenwood Springs, the ranch is one of the last major undeveloped pieces of land in the area, and has long been sought after by developers and conservationists alike. Wanting to preserve their ranching tradition and prevent development of the land, the Bairs approached the Eagle Valley Land Trust (EVLTL) and The Conservation Fund (TCF) with a proposal that would achieve both.

"This ranch has sustained our family and defined our heritage. When I asked my children they said they would rather stay and keep up the tradition of hard work than sell and go someplace else, and this project allows us to do that."

Craig Bair

In 2004, through a collaborative partnership TCF, EVLTL, BLM, Great Outdoors Colorado, and Eagle and Garfield county officials were able to permanently protect the Golden Bair Ranch from development. The main ranch parcel, consisting of 4,313 acres, was placed under a conservation easement, allowing the Bairs to continue working the land now and into the future. Furthermore, the conservation easement allows for continued preservation of the land, which is home to a diversity of wildlife, including a key corridor for elk, mule deer, black bear, and mountain lions.

The other parcel of land lies adjacent to the Colorado River at the eastern entrance of

Glenwood Canyon. This parcel was purchased outright by the BLM for management. The acquisition provides access to a premiere stretch of river for anglers and boaters, as well as providing increased protection of the Colorado River watershed.

LWCF funding has been used on conservation easements and land acquisitions similar to Bair Ranch across Colorado, allowing for the continued ranching heritage enjoyed by many families, while conserving lands and wildlife for the benefit of all.

References: EVLTL, BLM, TCF

TWO BRIDGES – STATE BRIDGE – DOTSERO

The Upper Colorado River has long been recognized as a premier trout fishing destination, with some stretches recognized as Gold Medal waters by the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife. However, fishing access along this stretch of river has always been limited because much of the land adjacent to the river is private. Eagle County Open Space acquired three put-ins along the lower Upper Colorado River in 2011, allowing for increased accessibility for anglers and boaters. A plan has been proposed that would convey these lands to BLM for permanent public access and management, with funding from LWCF a key ingredient for completing the project.

References: Eagle County Open Space, TCF

GOLDEN BAIR RANCH

- 4,313 acre Mountain Parcel preserved as working ranch through conservation easements
- 512 acre River Parcel acquired outright for watershed protection and accessibility
- Utilized \$1.5 million in LWCF funding
- Preserves one of the oldest working ranches in Colorado
- Provides access along three miles of the Colorado River, and ensures protection downstream of Glenwood Canyon entrance

Photo courtesy of The Conservation Fund.



Photos courtesy Toby Sprunk
Open Space Director

TROUT UNLIMITED IN COLORADO

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