THE COALITION AT A GLANCE

ANNUAL REPORT

VISION
WE ENVISION A COLORADO WHERE PEOPLE, LANDS, WATERS AND WILDLIFE THRIVE.

MISSION
OUR MISSION IS TO UNITE, ELEVATE AND EMPOWER COLORADO’S CONSERVATION COMMUNITY TO PROTECT THE LANDS AND WATERS THAT DEFINE OUR STATE.
Dear friends and partners in conservation,

2021 was another year of big change in the private lands conservation sector—and fortunately, the changes have been encouraging, empowering and everlasting. One thing has remained constant, however, and that’s the fierce dedication with which this community works to protect Colorado and its future. I’m proud of the role Keep It Colorado has played in advancing conservation for our state, and am eager to share highlights of our coalition’s progress and achievements in this report.

First, 2021 was a banner year in terms of our legislative and policy work with the successful passage of our bill, HB21-1233. The new law creates greater incentives for landowners who voluntarily choose to conserve their property and opens the door to water entities to be eligible for the state tax credit, among other opportunities to advance the pace and scale of conservation in Colorado.

We made significant headway on our Statewide Private Lands Conservation Plan with the formation of an advisory council, a series of statewide listening tours and a roadmap for the next 18 months. We also advanced our pilot program for alternative valuation. Both of these programs will continue to be key priorities for Keep It Colorado in 2022.

This year saw the addition of a pilot program that offers regrant funds to our members. The funds enable our land trusts to advance critical conservation projects and help streamline funding models; our plan is to grow this successful program into even broader opportunities that create financial sustainability for the private lands conservation sector.

We were pleased to hire a new team member in September—Raina Roanhorse joined as our grant programs and administrative coordinator, growing our team to 2.5 staff. We continued to provide resources and tools to help our members tell the story of private lands conservation and its benefits for Colorado. And for the first time since 2019, we held our summer regional meetings in-person!

This year we also took a more deliberate approach to initiating conversations about climate change, understanding that conservation is climate action. While the private lands community has been addressing issues of drought, water loss and the impacts of population growth for decades, through more concerted efforts we can make even deeper inroads to address climate change together. Finally, recognizing that there are many under-represented voices in strategic conversations about conservation in Colorado, we took action toward creating a more equitable, diverse and inclusive conservation community. Our work around climate and JEDI will be ongoing and we’re excited to move these conversations forward in 2022 and beyond.

I invite you to read details about our work in 2021 in this report, and to reach out to me any time for a virtual or in-person conversation. Thank you for support and for what you do to “keep it Colorado.”

-- Melissa Daruna, Executive Director

THANK YOU, PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS
2021 Strategy: Leading & Connecting

This year, we set the stage to help Keep It Colorado evolve from a land trust association to a leading conservation coalition. We continued to build and maintain support for our land trust members and provided a home for our core membership—building on a successful track record and further strengthening our credibility as a voice for conservation. Simultaneously, we created opportunities to ensure a sustainable future for the coalition’s work and advance conservation on a broader scale.

All of our work mapped back to our five core focus areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1. Policy Advocacy</th>
<th>We advocate for sound public policy that supports and advances more on-the-ground conservation based on members’ collective input and priorities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Member Connection &amp; Coalition-building</td>
<td>We create opportunities for members to come together to move the community forward in unison and reach common conservation goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Emerging Issues &amp; Opportunities Forum</td>
<td>We provide a forum for exploring and examining emerging issues and opportunities, including trends, tools and creative approaches that advance the pace of conservation and encourage innovation in conservation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Health &amp; Sustainability Solutions</td>
<td>We pursue and develop funding and programmatic solutions that strengthen the coalition’s ability and the greater conservation sector’s ability to continue this work now and into the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Advancing a Culture of Conservation</td>
<td>We connect more people in Colorado to conservation—past, present and future—through outreach, education and engagement, and collaborations and partnership-building.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

“Without Keep It Colorado we’d all be working on our own, in our own region, with our own priorities. And that work continues to happen and will get done. But Keep It Colorado allows this ability for collaboration on a statewide scale where we can come together, share what we know about what’s important with the work and then leverage that with all of our partners for an overall statewide vision.”

- Rebecca Jewett, CEO, Palmer Land Conservancy, and Keep It Colorado Board Chair
Conservation Legislation
In 2021, Governor Polis signed Conservation Easement Tax Credit Modifications (HB21-1233) into law after the coalition advocated for this legislation over a two-year period.

This legislation gives greater incentive to private landowners to voluntarily conserve and protect more land—benefiting all people and wildlife who rely on clean air and water, access to local food, healthy ecosystems and the iconic views for which Colorado is known. Opening the door to more land and water conservation is also good for Colorado’s economy and way of life. It helps Colorado’s rural farmers and ranchers stay in production, and ensure that the natural assets that draw outdoor and nature enthusiasts to Colorado are here for the long term.

Key bill elements:
- Increases the tax credit incentive to up to 90 percent of the donated value of a landowner’s conservation easement.
- Expands the list of eligible landowners who can access the tax credit program to include water entities, such as water conservancies and irrigation and acequia organizations.
- Establishes a tax credit tracking system within the Division of Conservation.
- Eliminates the requirement that tax credit buyers and sellers file their returns at the same time.
- Ensures that the Division of Conservation can serve as a receivership for orphaned (abandoned) easements, once a program is established, to find those easements new homes.

Learn more here.

Statewide Private Lands Conservation Plan
We launched the development of a collaborative plan that rallies land trusts and partners around a unified vision for the future of private lands conservation in Colorado. Providing a set of concrete objectives, strategy and vision, the plan will identify urgent areas for protection and create a roadmap for on-the-ground conservation the private lands conservation community wants to achieve in the next 10 years. Because 60 percent of lands in Colorado are privately owned, they account for a significant portion of the state that needs protection. Our plan will be a coordinated strategy to ensure that those lands feature prominently in a broader statewide conservation framework while working to meet 30x30 goals, address the climate crisis, and create a more diverse, inclusive and equitable conservation ethic in Colorado.

Key milestones:
- Established an Advisory Council to guide the plan’s development.
- Launched a statewide listening tour with over 110 participants representing a diverse cross-section of stakeholders.
- Laid the groundwork for next steps in 2022, including planning a forum to launch the plan development, and scheduling trainings on key data tools and frameworks with partners The Nature Conservancy and the Colorado Natural Heritage Program.

Learn more here.
**Transaction Cost Assistance Program (TCAP)**

In response to the need for financial support covering the high costs of conservation easement transaction assistance, we conceived and designed a program in partnership with Great Outdoors Colorado that would enable us to regrant funds to land trusts and landowners. In addition to offering assistance to allow conservation projects to move forward, the program would leverage more of the conservation easement tax credit, and assist GOCO in efficiently advancing its mission, and maximize the impact for the dollars invested.

With the success of TCAP, we are developing plans for a pooled grant fund. The Conservation Catalyst Fund will provide even more support to land conservation projects while exploring opportunities to provide streamlined funding models.

"Thank you for the very generous grant and for creating the opportunity. I know the family is equally grateful."

- Brendan Boepple, Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust

**Key outcomes:**
- Keep It Colorado provided **$516,915** in regrants, enabling 8 land trusts to complete 14 conservation projects in 2021 and 2022.
- Projects will help conserve more than **5,600** acres of land and leverage more than **$8.3 million** in tax credits through the state’s conservation easement tax credit program.
- Conservation activities will protect thousands of acres of land that would otherwise be at imminent risk of being sold, subdivided or converted to other uses.
- These projects represent a diverse cross-section of the state and protect critical habitat, local food systems, iconic viewsheds, wetland and river corridors, and places of historic and cultural significance.

Learn more here.

**Alternative Valuation Pilot Program**

We are developing a pilot to open new doors for valuing land beyond financial gains. Instead of valuing land according to the economic impact of removing future development opportunities, values would be based on the conservation opportunities and benefits the property brings to communities - such as healthy wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, clean water and reduced soil erosion.

**Key progress:**
- Partnered with Colorado State University to research alternative valuation methods.
- Convened industry leaders and experts to discuss the most viable valuation methods for Colorado.
- Began work on a pilot model rooted in fair market value of a property and focused on the conservation benefits a perpetual conservation easement provides.
- Secured funding to assist with capacity to continue developing the pilot model and program in 2022.

Learn more here.
Convening members for learning, connection and collaboration is a key aspect of our work. In 2021 we continued to bring members together through monthly "Circle" calls, webinars and six annual meetings—which we highlight below.

SPRING SUMMIT
Our two-day Spring Summit in April was virtual. Day 1 featured updates about programming and partnerships as well as a roundtable conversation about goals to protect 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030—and the critical role private lands conservation plays. On Day 2, "member showcases" gave 8 member organizations the chance to share conservation projects, case studies and success stories with their peers.

"I learned so much from the Summit, and I always enjoy hearing from members around the state. I am so grateful and proud to be part of this coalition." - Jessica Foulis, Eagle Valley Land Trust

SUMMER REGIONAL MEETINGS
This year we met in person for four regional meetings (vaccinations were required) and one virtual meeting. We convened members to discuss challenges, opportunities and emerging issues in conservation—from climate change, water scarcity and wildfires, to diversity, equity and inclusion. We also spent time walking the land to learn about conservation projects and connect with one another more personally. Meetings took us to Golden, Carbondale, Salida and Montrose.

FALL POLICY SUMMIT
In October we gathered in Vail for a hybrid in-person/virtual summit in partnership with the Colorado Open Space Alliance’s annual conference. The summit attracted about 60 attendees. Together we celebrated legislative successes in 2021, discussed the outcomes of HB21-1233 since it passed the Colorado Legislature in June, and set the coalition’s policy priorities for 2022.
Roundtable Conversation about Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
The private lands conservation community is exploring and defining what it means to create a more diverse, equitable and inclusive conservation space in Colorado. This year we gathered members virtually so they could hear from each other about how they are approaching JEDI in their organizations. People shared insights about conversations they are having with staff and board, actions they are taking, and challenges they face. JEDI work will look different for different communities—and recognizing it as an integral value of the coalition is an important step toward creating a Colorado where people, lands, waters and wildlife thrive.

"Let's Talk about Climate" Workshops
Keep It Colorado and The Land Trust Alliance teamed up to facilitate a 2-day workshop on communicating about climate change. Featuring speakers from The Nature Conservancy, Southern Plains Land Trust, Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts and US Nature4Climate, we developed the workshops after hearing from members that they’d like more tools to talk about climate change with their many audiences—from boards, partners and funders to landowners and community members—and how their on-the-ground conservation work is connected to it.

"It was so practical and something I've been planning on tackling all year. This is the perfect boot camp to get me started."
- Carly Bolliger, Aspen Valley Land Trust

We also presented at industry conferences and meetings to share the work of the coalition with the broader conservation community. Our goal is to ensure that Keep It Colorado and the private lands conservation sector have a strong voice in conservation discussions.

Land Trust Alliance's Rally
At the virtual Rally, Melissa Daruna of Keep It Colorado presented in a panel discussion, "Through the Looking Glass and Back with Syndicated CEs: Halting Abuse and Managing the Ugly Legacy," alongside our partners at Conservation Law P.C., Colorado Open Lands and Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust. Increasing incentives for landowners and making the tax credit system work better for more people is a priority for the private lands conservation community.

Colorado Open Space Alliance's Annual Conference
At COSA, Linda Lidov of Keep It Colorado co-facilitated "Benchmarks and Best Practices" with our partners at Logan Simpson and Boulder County Parks and Open Space. Open space agencies are often asked to track metrics to gauge program success, but sometimes don't have the tools to do so. The discussion looked at approaches for identifying, tracking and reporting metrics in recreation access and management; Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; and resilience.

Other panels and discussions Keep It Colorado participated in included The Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute's Land Use Conference, Water Education Colorado's annual event, and a 30x30 Listening Session with Rep. Joe Neguse and the Wilderness Society.
This year we developed and published the **Arkansas Basin Conservation Alliance case statement**, a 17-page report that tells the story of collaborative conservation in the Arkansas Basin. Based on conversations Keep It Colorado facilitated with Arkansas Basin land trusts and statewide partners, the report is a blueprint for talking about regional-scale conservation and the many economic, ecological and social benefits conservation provides. Our members are using this tool to foster more opportunities for strategic collaboration, educate influencers and attract more investment in conservation in this diverse region. Download the report.

We partnered with the Land Trust Alliance to publish **Remote Monitoring Technologies for Colorado Land Trusts**. The report shares a detailed analysis of our Remote Monitoring Program, through which we regranted funds to land trusts for exploring the use of satellite and aerial imagery to remotely monitor conserved properties in 2020. The report highlights the tangible and intangible benefits of remote technologies—including cost savings, time efficiencies and lower carbon emissions. Download the full analysis or the 2-page executive summary.

Finally, we developed or fine-tuned several toolkits to provide common messaging, templates, tips, links, sample materials and other resources our members and the greater community can customize and use. We hope these toolkits will support outreach efforts as our community seeks to educate more Coloradans about the public benefits of private lands conservation. Toolkits include our **Advocacy & Outreach Toolkit**, our **Making the Case for Conservation Toolkit** (download here) and our **Brief Guide to Conservation Easements** (download here).
MEASURING THE VALUE OF CONSERVATION

Conserved Acres

One way of measuring how much value conservation efforts provide is to calculate number of acres conserved. Below is a snapshot of acres conserved in Colorado, according to a survey Keep It Colorado conducted of our land trust and open space agency members in Nov.-Dec. 2021.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Acres conserved in 2021 (completed or anticipated by 12/31)</th>
<th>Total acres conserved since the org’s inception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land Trusts</td>
<td>78,000+</td>
<td>3,300,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Space Agencies</td>
<td>7,900+</td>
<td>1,080,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>85,900+</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,380,000+</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data from 22 land trusts and 12 open space agency members.

Beyond Acres Conserved

While traditional conservation through land protection continues to be a significant focus of our coalition’s work and can be measured in terms of acres conserved, there are other valuable ways to gauge progress. Engaging local communities in conservation and stewardship is one important measure. Below are a few snapshots.

**500+ events held in local communities**
- volunteer projects, outdoor and natural resource education programs, nature hikes, site visits/tours, open houses, fundraisers, community meetings, coffee chats

**1,700+ volunteers engaged in projects and events**
- restoration/planting, trail building, fence removal and repair, property monitoring, event support, artifact preservation

**19,900+ community members attended educational events**
- environment, stewardship, nature, biology, ecology, food production, land management, economics

Larger conservation organizations often work with partners—such as other land trusts or government agencies—to purchase land and conservation easements while other organizations manage and steward those lands over the long term. In addition, agencies often partner with each other to purchase and conserve properties and/or hold easements jointly. Total acres conserved since inception includes acres transferred to or held by other agencies in some cases. We took care to eliminate overlap, however, some duplication may still exist.

Source: Data from 22 land trusts and 6 open space agency members.
Beyond Acres Conserved (cont’d)

Elevating our members as conservation leaders is a Keep It Colorado priority. To celebrate their collective work, we offer highlights of ways in which they’ve innovated and expanded their programs or engaged communities in conservation; in many cases, these activities are intertwined.

Innovation and Expansion

Land trusts and open space agencies explored or developed a variety of new programs and initiatives in 2021.

- Riparian restoration, weed removal and seed collection
- Water management and watershed planning
- Metrics-based climate action, strategies and goals
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion benchmarks, including inclusive access to parks/open spaces for underserved communities and programs for low-income, non-English speaking and disabled community members
- Federal lands management and management planning with local municipalities
- Open space initiatives to address mental health concerns
- Senior, youth and family outreach programs
- Agricultural leasing with local farmers and ranchers
- Working groups, roundtables and collaboratives to balance recreational use and wildlife impacts on conserved lands
- Service-learning and volunteer stewardship
- Partnerships with volunteer groups, educators and park rangers
- Bicycle safety and operations education for children
- Local investments that spur economic revitalization
- New funding models for ag resiliency, wildfire mitigation and climate resiliency
- Retention or permanent renewal of existing parks, trails and open space sales tax

Community Conservation

Land trusts and open space agencies engaged their community members in conservation in numerous ways. Collectively, they are advancing an ethic of conservation across the state and building more awareness about the benefits of private lands conservation.

- Educational bike tours, guided nature hikes, wildflower walks, citizen science and experiential learning
- Dialogue and discussion about the future of conservation—even better over coffee, picnic lunches and ice cream!
- Connection, visioning and storytelling with Indigenous communities and tribal leaders
- Educational seminars with landowners about the benefits of voluntarily conserving their properties
- Volunteer restoration projects to support stewardship needs
- Workshops on fire mitigation, weed control and soil erosion
- Education about water, pollinator habitat and landscape prairies
- Collaborations with scientists, researchers and academics
- Community-developed open lands master plans
- Mural painting and community art installation events
- Delivery of locally grown food to people in need and publication of local food guides

Land trusts and open space agencies explored or developed a variety of new programs and initiatives in 2021. Collectively, they are elevating their members as conservation leaders and building more awareness about the benefits of private lands conservation.
MEASURES OF OUR SUCCESS

Key performance indicators

In 2021 we aimed to increase and enhance funding opportunities for private land conservation, support the land trust community in creating a statewide vision for conservation efforts, explore new conservation tools and ensure sustainability of Keep It Colorado as an organization.

We completed or made significant progress toward 95 percent of our KPI goals in the following areas. We will continue to work toward total completion in 2022:

- Coalition financial sustainability
- Coalition organizational sustainability
- Policy objectives
- Key member services
- Conservation leadership

100% membership retention 2020 to 2021

"This is a valuable partnership and is very relevant to our work. It's a good way to stay connected to best practices, conservation easements and policy."
- Christine Strickland, Jefferson County Open Space

Member satisfaction survey 2021

92% of survey respondents are satisfied with the coalition overall—including programs and services, outcomes of our work and communications.
Keep It Colorado's Story

This year we produced the “Creating a Colorado Where People, Lands, Waters and Wildlife Thrive” video. In it we share messages about the different meanings of conservation for our state's communities, highlight examples of our members' conservation work, and describe Keep It Colorado's role in advancing the pace and scale of conservation in Colorado.

*As of Dec. 31, 2021

Keep It Colorado is primarily funded through membership dues from land trusts, open space agencies, conservation professionals and nonprofit partners, as well as grants. Our core expenses go toward the programs and services we provide to the community and our members, staff salaries, and the organizational capacity it takes to make it all happen.

In 2021, we increased and diversified our revenue streams with the launch of our regrant programs. We aim to expand these programs with the development of a Conservation Catalyst Fund to create an ongoing and more sustainable revenue model.

### Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundations and donations:</td>
<td>$433,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted grants:</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Membership dues:</td>
<td>$101,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fees and corporate support:</td>
<td>$26,769</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$596,385</strong></td>
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### Expenses

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>Programs and services:</td>
<td>$61,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted programs:</td>
<td>$69,145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General and administrative:</td>
<td>$231,869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$362,599</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please click to view and share. Enjoy!
"I learned about Keep it Colorado from an article about bold plans to protect 30% of Colorado’s lands and waters by 2030. I grew up in Colorado, spending time in Glen Haven where a number of properties are part of a land trust. After returning from ~13yrs living in California, my wife and I are excited to contribute to preserving as much of Colorado’s open and wild spaces as possible. Conserving land, both for recreation and just for nature, is one of the things I believe in most strongly. That’s why I support Keep It Colorado."

– Brad Klingenberg, donor