



Music Meadows Ranch

Photo by Dan Ballard ©2011

BENCHM^AARK

NEWS FROM THE SAN ISABEL LAND PROTECTION TRUST

SPRING/SUMMER 2011

Music Meadows Ranch - Its Legacy in the Valley

by the Parker Family

Located 12 miles south of Westcliffe at the foot of the eastern slope of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, the 3,800 acre Music Meadows Ranch is highly visible to the public from CR 119 which accesses Music Pass and the Rainbow Trail. The property and surrounding region abound in scenic value and provide views with uniquely sharp contrasts due to its location on the interface area between the forested slopes of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and the open meadows of the Wet Mountain Valley. The property's creeks and drainages offer a scenic riparian area which supports significant wildlife habitat for large and small mammals, birds, amphibians and fish, as well as numerous grasses, forbs, shrubs and trees.

The property has been used for agricultural purposes for generations dating back to the 1800s when Jacob Beck came to the United States with the German colonists and bought the ranch in about 1872. Joe Beck, his youngest son, ran the cattle and haying operation. Joe and his family of three children lived in the existing house, which was originally a two room log cabin. The children attended the "Beck" school just inside the lower gate on the north end of the meadow. Fred Beck, Joseph's oldest son, lived on the west side of the road and he and his wife were the parents of Gladys who later married John Ulsh. John and his brothers helped Fred on his ranch and later Gladys and John ran that property.

Dewey Austin later leased the Beck ranch until the 1960's when Don Hanson ran a yearling operation on it until 1967. In 1968, the Beck ranch was bought by Bill and Dorothy Parker and they renamed it Music Meadows Ranch because of its proximity to Music Pass. Bill Parker made numerous improvements to the land mainly through expansion of the irrigation system

Continued on page 3



Photo by Dan Ballard ©2011

Put Your Dollars to Work

Owning land is not the only way to help to protect land through conservation easements. By making a gift of cash, stock, real estate or a bequest to San Isabel Land Protection Trust you help us have the resources necessary to continue our work to protect the beautiful landscapes of Custer, Fremont, Huerfano, and Pueblo counties.

Currently, we are seeking additional donations to enable us to fund a bargain-sale purchase of a conservation easement on the San Isabel Scout Ranch. For over 50 years Boy Scouts have travelled from all parts of the country to the Wet Mountains of south-central Colorado to visit the

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We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization

Our Mission

The San Isabel Land Protection Trust protects ranch, farm and forest lands, wildlife habitat, scenic views for public enjoyment and historic resources.



Dollars to Work *continued*

San Isabel Scout Ranch. Thousands of Scouts, their families, and other groups come each year to camp, hike and learn together about natural history and environmental stewardship. The setting makes the ideal camp: forests and streams, meadows and ponds, abundant wildlife and mountains looming above. The 409-acre Scout Ranch is contiguous on 3 sides with 200,000 acres of San Isabel National Forest. Recreation trails wind through the property. The San Isabel Scout Camp is a treasure— and we need your help to ensure that it is protected and will serve our area youth for generations to come. Earmark your gift to San Isabel Land Protection Trust by noting it is for the San Isabel Scout Ranch Fund.

If you are feeling the effects of the recent economy, as many of us are, but you still want to give... budget your donation and pledge a monetary gift once a month. This is a simple way to give and can be charged to your credit card automatically. *Katherine Ripley-Williams*

Plan a Bequest to SILPT

If you haven't reviewed your estate plans recently now is a good time. The Tax Relief Act signed into law in December, 2010 made major changes in gift and estate tax. Some of the changes created by the new law are:

- Estate tax exemption has been raised to \$5 million per person for 2011
- Gift and estate tax rate for 2010 and 2011 will be 35%

There are many other changes that you may want to discuss with your advisors.

Also consider naming SILPT in your will or living trust, and as a beneficiary of your IRAs, qualified retirement plans, and other assets that pass outside your will or trust. Such gifts are generally completely deductible for estate tax purposes. Please let us know if you provide for San Isabel in your plans so we can welcome you as a member of our San Isabel Land Protection Trust Legacy Society.

Save These Dates

Saturday, June 4 – Land Trust Field Day at Music Meadows, 6 am – 3:30 pm. Elin Parker Ganshow and the other members of the Parker family are generously opening up the Ranch for hikes, photography, painting, fishing, bird watching and lunch. (See the sign up form on the back page) Elin will also have grass beef available for sale that same day. If you are interested in beef, contact her ahead of time at 783-2222 or info@musicmeadows.com.

Sunday, August 28 – Beer and Brats picnic at Lower Kennicott Ranch for our supporters, 5-7 pm. **To help us put more of our funding toward land preservation, we'd love to be able to send you an invitation by email as the time gets closer. Please send your email address to annie@sanisabel.org and you will be sure to receive an invitation with directions.**

Saturday, September 24 – Art for the Sangres at the Historic Pines Ranch, 3:30 pm – 7:00 pm. (See the ad on page 6)

Music Meadows Ranch *continued*

including the construction of run-off dams in one of the high corners of the ranch. For forty years the Parkers have run an average of 700 yearlings in the summer months, depending on the grass conditions and the north meadow was occasionally used for hay production. John Ulsh continued to help care for the ranch, especially the irrigation, until his retirement after 34 years.

In 1974, the “Mud Flats” property was added to the ranch. An old cabin was on the property and the land had been used mainly to raise potatoes. Gladys’ Grandpa Degree lived on the pasture nearby and also raised potatoes. Bill and Dorothy’s six children have fond memories of their life on the ranch. One such memory was when for the first time to their surprise they were able to catch trout in the stream. Unbeknownst to them their father had stocked the stream with brook trout enabling them to all be successful fishermen. From that point forward they would carry a fishing line, salt shaker and matches in their saddle bags, just in case they got hungry while horse back riding!

Other favorite pastimes for the Parker children were riding their horses bareback and taking them for a swim in the pond north of the ranch house. There were also many memorable hot dog and s’more cookouts up in the “Lake Pasture” after a lazy day of fishing for rainbow trout. A great campground was near Hudson Creek, in the Sangre de Cristos, and but a short 45 minute horseback ride from the ranch house. Watching the water spill over Crystal Falls in the spring was also a real treat.

Elin Ganschow, a daughter of Bill and Dorothy Parker and manager of the ranch, said; “Music Meadows is indeed a great place. It’s a great place for growing beef – including grass fed beef, and for watching golden eagles, black bear, antelope, deer and elk. The view of the Needles is one of the best in the Wet Mountain Valley, and access to the Rainbow Trail is right across the fence.”

The Parker family knows what a special place Music Meadows ranch is from personal experience and they hope that it will continue to be just that, forever. That is why in December of 2010, they put a conservation easement on the ranch to

protect its scenic value and to ensure that it will always remain a working cattle ranch.

The family began thinking about the ranch and its legacy in the Wet Mountain Valley several years ago. They began to explore the idea of putting a conservation easement on the



property to protect it from development, and soon realized that it would give the family, now grown to eighteen members, a number of benefits.

They understood that a conservation easement is an exercise in private property rights and they would retain ownership of the land. As landowners who donated an easement, they in turn would gain the personal satisfaction of protecting the conservation values found on their land. They would also receive a partner, San Isabel Land Protection Trust, who would share land stewardship responsibility and assurance that conservation values protected by the easement will be maintained by future landowners. The family would also be eligible for certain tax benefits, and for them this was important. Their ranch, protected by the conservation easement, can always be sold, thus providing income if they or future generations choose to or need to sell the land.

Elin said, “The family was interested in seeing the ranch preserved, and found the perfect tool, a conservation easement, and a great organization to partner with, San Isabel Land Protection Trust, allowing them to do just that.”

Thank you to all our 2010

2010 Easement Donors

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Humboldt Peak Partners, LLC
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Ginger & John Whellock
Steve & Peggy Willman
Jim & Sue Winslow
Richard & Rochelle Wright
Dana Wyrick
Yoder's Mountain View Furniture
Eloise & Stephen Young

Opportunities to Volunteer

If you would enjoy the opportunity to become acquainted with one or more of our protected properties, join us as a monitoring volunteer. Art for the Sangres also offers the chance to volunteer by helping as a docent for an artist or assisting with the many other jobs that come together to make this such a special event.

If you are interested in participating in either of these opportunities, please email annie@sanibel.org and I'll get you on the list.

BECOME A SPONSOR

A very important aspect of Art for the Sangres is our sponsorships. Money contributed by sponsors (both businesses and individuals) helps defray the cost of our party for the artists and the event itself. We have many who loyally support us every year but we'd love to expand our base. A basic sponsorship is \$175 and includes 2 tickets to Art for the Sangres, acknowledgement in the show catalog and a sponsor ad in the Wet Mountain Tribune. Patron sponsorship is \$350 and includes all of the above plus an opportunity to attend the Artists Party the night before to meet the artists who will be showing the next day.

If you are interested, please email annie@sanisabel.org as soon as possible and we'll send you a sponsor packet.

Conservation Report – Spring 2011

by Ben Lenth

In the past six months the San Isabel Land Protection Trust has closed two additional conservation easements, and has several others that are imminently ready to close.

Music Meadows, Phase 2

In late December the second and final phase of the Music Meadows Ranch conservation easement closed. This 1,200 acre conservation easement brings the total protected area on the Music Meadows Ranch to 3,680 acres. This project was funded by a GOCO Legacy Grant, the NRCS Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP), the Gates Family Foundation, and several private donors. This project is the first-ever GRP grant to be used by a land trust in the country!

Humboldt Peak Ranch, Phase 3

This 3rd and final phase eliminated the remaining two subdivisions and building sites on the 320-acre conservation easement, protecting scenic irrigated hayfields, forest and riparian corridors. This is the first “clustered” housing development in the county, protecting the majority of the ranch while permitting limited development outside of the conservation easement. The overall density of houses is reduced by over half compared to permissible subdivision per county zoning.

Coincidentally, my wife, daughter and I are currently moving to the Humboldt Peak Ranch to live and serve as caretakers. We are excited to live on and be involved with such a beautiful property.

Water and land conservation

Lately, water issues have come to the forefront of local conversations following two well-publicized water court applications for blanket augmentation plans on the Grape and Texas Creek watersheds. As many of you know, the San Isabel Land Protection Trust filed as an objector in both of these cases as a means to seek clarity on the scale and effects of these plans on conservation easement properties with water rights. The land trust has a vested interest in the water rights on 42 different properties – over a hundred water rights in all. Our responsibility is to protect the conservation values of these properties, many of which are dependent on those water rights.

This activity has prompted the San Isabel Land Protection Trust to examine its policy of “tying water to the land”



Pond at Humboldt Peak Ranch, photo by Ben Lenth

through a conservation easement. “Tying water to the land” means preventing the separation of water from irrigated land by selling it, usually to a municipality. The intent of tying water to the land is to ensure the availability of water to serve the conservation values of a protected property. Virtually all water rights on conservation easements are for irrigated agricultural land – which is also great wildlife habitat and is spectacularly beautiful. Those three factors – agriculture, ecology, and scenery – are the core of what conservation easements seek to protect.

Tying water to the land on a property must provide enough flexibility for landowners to manage their land as they see fit, which could mean choosing not to use the water for periods of time. When that is the case, how should the water be used? Should preference be given to use the water locally, e.g. “keep it in the valley”? Or, should preference be given to use the water for agriculture elsewhere? Or should it be left in the stream for fish? Many options have good conservation outcomes, and the land trust is working to protect water rights in practical, sensible, and responsible ways that serve the needs of both private landowners and the broader public.

Looking ahead, demand for and uses of water will only increase. The land trust seeks to ensure the full protection of our conservation easement properties and serve the needs of the community in the long term. The protection of water rights will always be central to what we do.



2010 Fiscal Year

by Lynn Karantz, Treasurer

In our 16th year as a Land Trust, we are looking towards the future, and trying to think about how we plan for perpetuity. Land Trusts are the only nonprofit that pledge to be here in perpetuity, and with this comes the enormous responsibility to ensure our viability forever. San Isabel Land Protection Trust has managed its reserves well, and views its future with a healthy but cautious optimism. The last couple of years have presented us with challenges, mainly because of the general downturn in the economy and because of the uncertainty of tax credit programs both at the state and federal levels resulting in fewer conservation easements.

As the condensed statement of activities below reflects, 2010 was a difficult year for our unrestricted net assets. Our staff and volunteers worked diligently to identify new revenue streams from grants and other sources, and our supporters kept donations and fund-raising revenues at levels similar to last year. However, we faced a reduced number of easements with increasing costs to close. The net result was a decrease in our unrestricted net assets, otherwise known as our operating assets, of \$72,315 (unaudited). This decrease emphasizes how important your support is to our organization.

On a more positive note, we continued to build our stewardship assets, as shown below. These funds are restricted to only be used primarily to pay for monitoring costs and legal defense of existing easements.

We are optimistic about the coming year and are seeing new opportunities for growth that we look forward to sharing with you in the coming months.

		For year ended	
		3/31/2011	3/31/2010
Unrestricted statement of activities:			
Revenues			
Donations	(1)	96,861	110,713
Other sources		19,246	15,041
Program income		31,268	24,368
Fundraisers, net of expenses		25,461	30,090
Dividends and interest		1,147	6,498
Investment gain (loss)		(965)	10,317
		173,017	197,027
Expenses	(1)	245,152	212,490
Decrease in unrestricted net assets		(72,135)	(15,463)
Restricted for stewardship activities:			
Revenues			
Donations		46,650	73,284
Dividends and interest		8,807	10,796
Investment gain (loss)		18,538	57,547
		73,995	141,627
Expenses		(6,140)	(4,175)
Increase in stewardship restricted net assets		67,855	137,452

(1) Excludes pass through donation and related expense of \$70,000 for Music Meadows.

(2) Excludes a non-cash investment gain on land held for investment purposes of \$244,860.

ART FOR THE SANGRES!

Tickets \$50

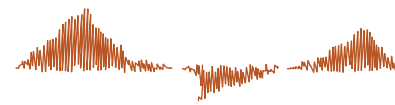
Reception begins: 4:30 pm

Drawing for fixed price

lottery sale: 7:00 pm

September 24, 2011

**The Historic Pines Ranch
Westcliffe, Colorado**



The Artists

Bill Alther
Dix Baines
Angie Coleman
Carl Dalio
Shane Dimmick
Shane Duerksen
Adele Earnshaw
Joe Garcia
Jim Gilmore
Andree Hudson
Paul Kethley
David Mayer
Anita Mosher
Elizabeth Sandia
Aaron Schuerr
Nathan Solano
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Rebecca Tobey
Mike Untiedt
Jerry Weers
Don Weller
Grace Wever
Ginger Whellock
Sarah Woods
Dinah Worman

One third of all proceeds benefit the
San Isabel Land Protection Trust

For more information go to www.sanisabel.org

San Isabel Field Day at Music Meadows Ranch

Saturday, June 4: 6am to 3:30pm

\$15/ person, \$5 children 3-12, 2 and under free. Children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

Please check all activities you would like to participate in. Sign up for as many as you wish:

- 6 AM - Photography with assistance and input from several experienced photographers
- 6 AM – Bird watching hike led by Leon Bright from the Audubon chapter
- 9 AM – Photography with assistance
- Plein air painting around the ranch any time during the day.
- Catch and release fishing and archery for kids assisted by Outdoor Buddies
- Hike to Crystal Falls
- 12:00 PM – lunch - Music Meadows grass fed beef, with salads and desserts.
- Discount horseback riding, reservations limited. One hour range ride \$25, two hours \$45.
(Please contact Elin directly to arrange at 783-2222 or email info@musicmeadows.com)

Parking will be available at the Ranch

Pre-registration required. Check activities you are interested in and return the form with payment to SILPT, PO Box 124 or email holly@sanisabel.org, or call 783-3018 with credit card information. Cancellations accepted up to June 1st., after June 1st. a cancellation fee of \$5 will be charged. If you have questions: call 783-3018 or email holly@sanisabel.org

Name: _____ Number in group: Adults _____ Children _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____ Payment enclosed _____

SUPPORT OUR WORK!

I would like to support the work of the San Isabel Land Protection Trust.

Name:

Address

City, State, Zip

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\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250

\$500 \$1000 other \$

Please make checks payable to San Isabel Land Protection Trust. PO Box 124 Westcliffe, CO 81252



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