



Protected lands and water are important to our future.

BENCHMARK FALL/WINTER 2014

San Isabel Receives Ownership of The Bluff Park

By Ben Lenth

We are excited to share the news that in June of this year we received ownership of the two central parcels of the Bluff Park, located at the end of Main Street in downtown Westcliffe. The Bluff is a unique and popular park with a large open lawn and incredible views across the Wet Mountain Valley, with the dramatic Sangre de Cristo Mountains as a backdrop. The property was donated to San Isabel by Richard and Audrey Stermer, whose vision for The Bluff culminated in last year's park expansion and

renovation, and now in the transfer of the property to the land trust. We are grateful to the Stermers for their leadership and generosity in the creation of this public place, and to the kindness and dedication of many additional donors and volunteers who made this project a reality.

The Bluff is a special place for our community and for visitors – people naturally gravitate there to relax and play, walk dogs or just take in the views. It is also the site of the Westcliffe's annual High Mountain Hay Fever Bluegrass festival, numerous private weddings, and other local events. Nearly everyone ends up at The Bluff, even by accident. Memories are made there.

Parks are precious. In many communities across the country, both urban and rural, people don't have public parks nearby to enjoy. That's why we're currently working to protect The Bluff, forever, by donating a conservation easement on the parcels to Colorado Open Lands. Even ownership by the land trust isn't adequate; only through a conservation easement can we guarantee you that The Bluff Park will be open space, forever. *Continued on page 3*



Photo by Kate Spinelli, Preservation Photographys © 2014



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

Our Mission

San Isabel Land Protection Trust works with landowners to protect agricultural and forest lands, water resources, wildlife habitat and scenic open spaces, and also serves the community by facilitating parks and trails.



From the Director



It seems to me extraordinary luck that my daughters' early years are taking place here in an aspen grove on a protected ranch in the Wet Mountain Valley. In one way, we're caught in time, enjoying life in one of the last great ranching valleys in Colorado. But society is changing so incredibly fast that I cannot help but believe

we are all on the brink of something remarkable.

2015 will be San Isabel's 20th anniversary. For these first two decades, the land trust has been driven and defined by what we *don't* want – rapid subdivision, agricultural dry-up, the loss of wildlife habitat and our heritage. These are important reasons to act, and our work is far from done. However, as we look towards our future, San Isabel would like to be driven by what we *do* want. What does a vibrant future look like, and how do we get there? How can the land trust position itself to facilitate dialogue and action that will serve us moving forward?

Some of Colorado's greatest tensions are between urban and rural communities. Water, our most precious natural resource, is right at the center of this tension. Everybody wants the same thing: enough water to support our lifestyles and industries, to maintain what we have and provide for what we need into the future. What urban municipalities and industries don't seem to understand is that when they buy water from Colorado agriculture, they are severely damaging rural communities. I can't think of a private property rights decision that has more impact in our region than the purchase of agricultural water off the land. Urban and Rural Colorado are interdependent – we need each other, for food, for commerce, for our love of the state. Land trusts seek to be a resource to both urban and rural communities interested in land, how we live on it, and what potential lies ahead.

San Isabel wants to continue these dialogues, and our actions are picking up speed. The time for conservation is now, and our current conservation easement projects cover over 3,000 acres in three counties, with very significant water rights. We are having ongoing discussions with dozens of families. This summer we completed a conservation analysis of our region and have identified our conservation priorities, so we know who we need to talk to and what we need to do. We continue to invest in outreach and fundraising so we may bring more conservation to fruition. We are poised for success, and can't do it without your help.

Thank you for being part of this community.

– Ben Lenth

2014 Art Show Paints a Bright Future

Wet Mountain Valley residents and guests traveling from as far and wide as Texas and Pennsylvania, attended the 18th Annual Art for the Sangres event at A Painted View Ranch in Westcliffe at the end of September. The annual gala is San Isabel's largest fundraiser of the year. The event sold over \$131,000 in artwork, exceeding all expectations, with 40% of proceeds going to our Land Trust. Last year's event grossed \$114,000. The event has doubled its net profit in the last two years, painting a bright future for land conservation and the arts in this very special corner of Colorado.

On Friday night over 110 sponsors and artists enjoyed a private party at the ranch and an estimated 200 people attended the Saturday night reception. Twenty-eight artists representing a variety of media traveled from California, New Mexico, Colorado, and beyond

to showcase their art. Plans for the 2015 show are already underway. Organizers anticipate some great new changes to the event. Mark your calendar for Saturday, September 26, 2015.



Joshua Been, Salida, CO. 2014 Artist

The Bluff Park ... *continued*

San Isabel's two parcels, over five acres, are bordered by lots owned by the Town of Westcliffe. They are jointly managed totaling ten acres and are linked by a trail. We are fortunate to partner with the Town for caretaking, maintenance and events management of this community resource.

In the coming year, we will continue to enhance the park with new amenities, flowers and shrubs, trying to make it even more inviting. We will also create and install a series of interpretive signs describing

some of the stories hidden in the views that are experienced from the Bluff. The Bluff Park is open to the public from 6am to 10pm daily.

Let us know and we'll meet you there! If you would like to rent the park for a private event, please contact the Town of Westcliffe at 719-783-2282.

We'd like to hear from you – what do you see from The Bluff? What calls to you when you're there?



Photo © Bill Gillette 2014

Dry-up of a Special Ranch – A Proactive Approach

By Kristie Nackord, Director of Development



Located within the ‘banana belt’ of the Upper Arkansas River Basin along the Highway 50 corridor lies the quaint agricultural town of Coaldale. This

lush valley sits at the western end of Fremont County with the majestic Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the west and the Arkansas River flowing to the east. Home to approximately 250 people including multi-generational ranchers,

families, retirees, and working professionals, this valley is also a part of Big Horn Sheep Canyon—in honor of the regal sheep who often dot the highway and the hillsides. Admittedly, before I moved here, Coaldale was just a little

blip along the road that I passed through on my way to Salida. If I blinked, I missed it. Today, it is where I call home.

Dry-up of a very special ranch

Over the last decades the pressures of development have been closing in on Coaldale. In fact, this summer we learned of the sale of a ranch that is very central and important to our valley.

The CB Ranch, borders Hwy 50 and comprises a significant part of the view shed as you drive through the canyon. The land, along with the associated senior water rights dating back to 1873, was purchased by Security Water District near Colorado Springs. As we have witnessed with other municipal purchases of agricultural lands and water, Security will likely take the

hay meadow out of production, transfer the water for their municipal needs, and eventually subdivide the land. If the land is left uncared for as it might be in situations like this, what will remain will be a dusty, brown field of weeds full of insects. This change will impact surrounding property values, wildlife migration patterns, and this iconic and beautiful part of the Upper Arkansas watershed will be changed forever.

A proactive approach

While San Isabel’s primary goal is to prevent productive lands and water resources such as the CB Ranch from being developed through the use of conservation easements, we also recognize that change is upon us. With the population of Colorado expected to double by 2050, municipalities on the Front Range will continue to buy agricultural water from rural Colorado. Ranches will be dried up and divided. This trend will not end. In fact, it will continue to pick up momentum. Our question now becomes, when landowners are unable to work with land trusts to tie their water to the land through the use of a conservation easement, then what can we do in the face of this change? How do we support the rural communities of Colorado when this does happen?

San Isabel seeks a proactive approach.

In July, we hosted a water forum meeting for Western Fremont County where we discussed the sale of the CB Ranch. We educated the community on the process and timing of the water transfer and opportunities for involvement and negotiation. The community was encouraged to create a coalition and to file a “Statement of Objection” in water court as a group when the change of water use paperwork is filed by

“With the population of Colorado expected to double by 2050, municipalities on the Front Range will continue to buy agricultural water from rural Colorado.”



Security Water District. A unified voice will be stronger than disparate individual voices.

Proper mitigation

With other ranches that have dried up in our region, we know that great care and consideration must be given to ensure proper mitigation. We know that the standards of reclamation to dry land prairie need to be improved and a proper baseline analysis for soil, water, and vegetation must be conducted. One only need to look to South Park, the H2O Ranch near Westcliffe, or the Hill Ranch in Chaffee County to know this is true. Communities should also consider financial compensation for weed and insect management and other ongoing reclamation needs.

The mission of a land trust is to protect the land before the water leaves. However, in the cases where a this is not possible, I believe land trusts can still take an active role with caring for the land. Because of a land trust's know-how and expertise, as well as our natural role as a facilitator of community dialogue, we can support communities with what can appear to be a daunting and complicated journey.

Working together for creative land uses

I want to encourage rural and urban Colorado to work together to consider creative land uses for the ranches when the water transfers, too. For Coaldale and other communities affected by dry-up, perhaps the municipalities would be willing to offset these impacts by funding new land protection, watershed restoration projects, or other actions beneficial to the community such as supporting job creation, or donating back a small parcel to the community for a garden, ball field or dog park. If Security and other municipalities that purchase agricultural water acknowledge, take responsibility, and compensate for the impact water transfers have on rural communities, I believe there can a positive outcome for all.

Visit these websites to learn more about Colorado water and conservation:

- Colorado Foundation for Water Education www.yourwatercolorado.org
- Colorado Division of Water Resources water.state.co.us
- Colorado Water Conservation Board www.sanisabel.org/cwcb.state.co.us
- Colorado's Water Plan www.coloradowaterplan.com

Download a copy of the July 24th Western Fremont County Water Forum handout by visiting our blog: www.sanisabel.org

2013 Financial Report

by Lynn Karantz, Treasurer

We have just completed our annual financial review by our independent accountants, Waugh & Goodwin, LLP, from Colorado Springs. While awaiting release of the final report, we are pleased to report the following operating results for our 2013 fiscal year which ended March 31, 2014:

REVENUE:

Fundraising Events	\$ 85,000
Program related fees	\$ 62,000
Contributions	\$ 69,000
Real estate sales	\$ 74,000
Grants	\$ 21,000
Dividend and interest income	\$ 11,000
Realized and unrealized gains on investments ...	\$ 42,000
Total	\$364,000

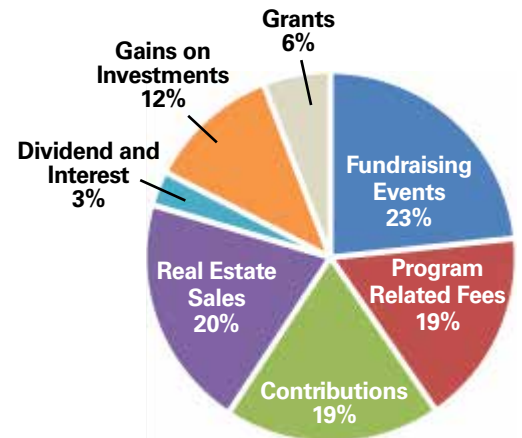
EXPENSES (allocated by function):

Program costs	\$158,000
Fundraising	\$ 66,000
Administrative	\$ 15,000
Total	\$239,000

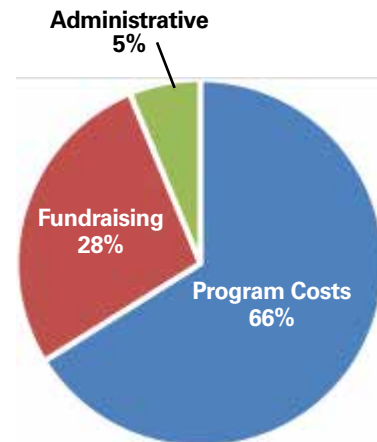
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES \$125,000

As reported in our 2014 Spring/Summer newsletter, San Isabel raised a significant amount of revenue, approximately 63% of our total, for either donor or Board restricted purposes. This includes revenue from real estate sales, donations for the Paul Snyder Fund, donations to fund our Colorado Open Lands Fellowship staff position, and investment and program fees allocated to our Stewardship fund. Donor and Board restricted funds are accumulated and segregated from operating (unrestricted) funds, either through separate bank accounts or separate accounting. This practice ensures that donors' wishes are fulfilled, and in the case of real estate sales, that this money is used strategically to invest in priority initiatives, and not simply be used by general operating expenses. The restriction of this money put pressure on our operating budget. Once restricted revenues and expenses are excluded, we incurred a net loss, or excess of expenses over revenues, from unrestricted activities of approximately \$39,000. This loss resulted primarily from three factors: first, a shortfall in project related revenue; second, a shortfall in unrestricted donations; and third, a

REVENUE



EXPENSES



higher than anticipated fundraising expenses following the Board's decision to invest in a long-term fundraising plan, including the staffing of the land trust's first ever full-time Director of Development.

Thank you again for supporting our organization through your continued generosity! Please remember us this year during the Wet Mountain Valley Community Foundation's Spirit Campaign. All funds received from this campaign fund our unrestricted activities, furthering the core work of our mission.

2nd Annual Alice Proctor Outstanding Volunteer Award

San Isabel Land Protection Trust honored longtime supporter and Westcliffe resident Dianne Whalen with the 2nd Annual Alice Proctor Outstanding Volunteer Award during our annual Beer and Brats appreciation barbecue at Texas Creek Ranch this summer.



Dianne was recognized as being an integral part of San Isabel over the last twelve years, including as our former Board President. She assisted us with becoming one of the first land trusts in the United States to become accredited through the Land Trust Alliance, and continues her commitment to land conservation as the current

Chairperson of Art for the Sangres, helping the event double its net profit in just two short years.

Over 200 people gathered to celebrate land conservation during our annual donor appreciation BBQ. Texas Creek Ranch is one of the Valley's oldest productive ranches dating back to the 1870's with productive hayfields and senior water rights. Previously owned by Bill and the late Smokey Jack, the ranch was sold to Larry and Ann Gerdes in 2011. The Gerdes placed a conservation easement on the ranch in 2012 that is held by San Isabel Land Protection Trust.

Volunteers are the backbone of San Isabel, with over 50 volunteers actively working with our organization each year toward our mission of protecting land and water in our region. We wouldn't be where we are today without them.

The award is given in the memory of founding SILPT board member Alice Proctor who continued to be involved with our land trust until her death in 2012. Alice's husband, Charles Proctor, continues to be active within our organization.

Correction

San Isabel is responsible for all errors and omissions in its publications. In our 2014 spring/summer newsletter, we made such an omission in our list of supporters. We mistakenly forgot our Treasurer Lynn Karantz and her husband Bob, who are major donors. If you find errors or omissions, or question or object with what we write, please let us know.

Holiday Sale



We have a wonderful collection of fine art and other items for sale on our website including books, San Isabel water bottles (\$15) and shirts (\$20)!

All proceeds benefit our Land Trust.

Visit us online!

www.sanisabel.org

Wish List

- SUV or 4WD truck - our old Ford Bronco has seen better days!
- Large format color printer
- Fireproof filing cabinet

If you are interested in donating or making a financial contribution toward these items, please contact our office at 719.783.3018 or email Kristie@Sanisabel.org

Let's Stay Connected!

Find us on Facebook

www.facebook.com/SanIsabel.LandTrust

Find us on Twitter



www.twitter.com/SanIsabelLPT

Conserve Paper!



Conserve paper and receive periodic updates from SILPT via email!

Email Kristie@Sanisabel.org and we will add you to our list.

Your help is needed!

We are actively working with 7 land-owners to protect 3,000 acres in our service area and we need your help!

Please remember San Isabel during your Holiday giving so that we can continue protecting our working ranches, water resources, scenic open views, and wildlife habitat.

Donate online!

www.sanisabel.org



Photo by Dan Ballard © 2013

Save the Date

June 7, 2015

3rd Annual Hardscrabble Mountain Trail Run

www.hardscrabblerun.com

September 26, 2015

19th Annual Art for the Sangres

www.artforthesangres.com



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