



Brandenburg Ranch

Photo by Annie Layman © 2013

BENCHMARK

NEWS FROM SAN ISABEL LAND PROTECTION TRUST

FALL/WINTER 2013

The Gift of Land

Donations of land multiply conservation outcomes

By Ben Lenth

San Isabel Land Protection Trust is honored and grateful to have received two gifts of land in its history, both of which will serve to expand our conservation work in creative and practical ways. These gifts have come from two different families, at two distinct times in the land trust's history. Now in 2013, both are permanently protected with conservation easements, and both have been sold to provide essential revenue to fortify the organization for the long-term.

In 1998, the late Norman Wheeler donated a sizeable and diverse parcel of land in Huerfano County to the then-named San Isabel Foundation. The property, located just over a ridge from Pass Creek Road, is exceptional wildlife habitat, with a mix of open grassy parks, piñon-juniper woodlands, Gambel oak patches, and Ponderosa Pine Forest. With nothing but an old adobe cabin and a stock tank on the place, the Wheeler Preserve has been left relatively wild throughout our 15 years of ownership.

This year, Waite and Linda Osterkamp donated to us their stunning property on Middle Colony Creek in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of Custer County. Surrounded on three sides by San Isabel National Forest, and a stone's throw

from the Rainbow Trail, the Osterkamp Preserve has served as a family retreat and research station for Mr. Osterkamp's students of hydrogeology and forest ecology. Mr. Osterkamp's deep understanding of the property and watershed allowed him to build an expertly located and engineered micro-hydroelectric generation system, a unique and truly sustainable power supply for a beautiful cabin. Other than this, the property has been managed as wilderness, and it is protected by a conservation easement held by Land Trust of the Upper Arkansas.

Continued on page 4



The Osterkamp Preserve





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Americorps VISTA Volunteer: Adam Belmonte

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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 ranch, farm and forest lands, wildlife habitat, scenic views for public enjoyment and historic resources.



From the Director



Winter has arrived once again, with snow on the mountains and wood smoke in the air of the Wet Mountain Valley. It's a sweet time to be home.

2013 has been a year of growth for San Isabel, with new protected lands, new staff, a new event (the Hardscrabble Mountain Trail Run), a new venue for Art for the Sangres, and other positive changes. Our

outreach events have reached new places and new people. Looking forward to 2014, we will continue to increase the pace of conservation, creating a new 3-year strategic plan to prioritize and guide our programs, and a strategic conservation plan to fine-tune our conservation goals, and renewing our Accredited status with the Land Trust Alliance to ensure that we're operating to the highest industry standards. All of this is essential to make good on our promise to protect our lands and waters permanently.

The addition of our two new staff members, Adam Belmonte and Mike Downey, will propel our land conservation work ahead. Adam is leading our strategic conservation plan, identifying the lands and waters most important to a healthy landscape, and Mike is lending his legal expertise to new conservation projects and to the diverse legal aspects of our work. If you haven't met them yet, please stop by to do so.

With the obligation of perpetuity, one of San Isabel's core goals is financial sustainability. Having sold the Wheeler and Osterkamp Properties this year, we are considering how to best utilize that revenue for the organization's long-term health. And we are thrilled to report that Mike's position is completely funded for the next two years, thanks to generous gifts from the Colorado Conservation Trust (now Colorado Open Lands), the Land Trust Alliance, and a number of very generous private donors. Next, we are gearing up for our annual Spirit Campaign with the Wet Mountain Valley Community Foundation, in which the Foundation provides matches for contributions through the end of December. In all of these cases, we are trying to leverage your contributions to generate the largest impact.

We can't do this without you. Thank you for your support and your dedication!

Land and Water Protection Report

Since our last newsletter, San Isabel Land Protection Trust has worked with three families to complete land protection projects in three counties. We are grateful to the landowners for their good works.

La Tierra

Matt and Julia Wills' gorgeous 426 acre property, known as "La Tierra", is a classic Colorado foothills property in the transition between the grasslands of the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains, along the eastern slope of the Wet Mountains near Rye in southwestern Pueblo County. La Tierra is important ecologically to this region, with a diversity of ecosystems and vegetative communities, and serving as a buffer to the adjacent San Isabel National Forest. The Little St. Charles Creek traverses a portion of the Property, providing an important source of water for wildlife, as well as a travel corridor along the riparian vegetation through the steep canyon. Travelers along Old San Isabel Road, Dieffendorfer Road, and Robb Road are treated to numerous panoramas of this picturesque landscape.



Saints Margaret Highland

Joseph and Edna Devai's mountainous 42 acre property is part of a 1,200 acre complex of protected land adjacent to San Isabel National Forest on the west side of the Wet Mountain Valley. This forested property is visible from much of the Wet Mountain Valley, and serves as valuable habitat for elk and other species. The Property's name is given in regard for two exceptional women of the Devai's native Hungary: St. Margaret of Scotland (11th century) and St. Margaret of Hungary (13th century), both of whom faced exile but devoted their lives to peacemaking, reform, and the well-being of others.



Wheeler Preserve / Schirmer Property

In October, SILPT retained a conservation easement simultaneous with the sale of the Wheeler Preserve to Ms. Mary Ann Schirmer. This 452 acre property is adjacent to land managed by the BLM on three sides, as well as to another protected ranch. The Property provides excellent wildlife habitat due to its diverse vegetation, including piñon/juniper woodlands and ponderosa pine stands, punctuated with open grassland parks, rocky outcroppings and significant stands of Gambel oak. The Property is also visible to the general public from several county roads. (For additional information about the Wheeler Preserve, please see our cover story).



San Isabel Welcome Two New Board Members

Joining the 13-member Board of Directors for San Isabel are Larry Vickerman of Arvada and Claudia Cole of Westcliffe.

Larry was born and raised in the Wet Mountain Valley and went on to receive his B.S. in Landscape Management from Colorado State University, and a M.S. from the University of Washington in Public Garden Management. Currently he is Director of Denver Botanic Gardens at Chatfield, a 750-acre farm, garden, and natural area in Littleton. Larry has spent the majority of his career developing botanical gardens and preserving prairies in Washington, Kansas and Colorado. With a deep passion for the Wet Mountain Valley, and Southern Colorado in general, Larry grew up on a ranch and adheres to the adage “if you take care of the land, it will take care of you.” He believes that a vibrant economy and a thriving ecosystem do not have to be mutually exclusive. Larry is a partner and active manager of the HG Vickerman Ranch located 10 miles south of Westcliffe,

which is protected with a conservation easement held by San Isabel Land Protection Trust.

Claudia and her husband Jim have been residents of Wet Mountain Valley for more than 20 years. With a business background in sales and marketing, Claudia recently retired as assistant director at the West Custer County Library after eight years. With an abiding interest in preserving the beautiful landscape and ranching heritage of our valley for future generations to enjoy, the Coles were one of the first families to work with SILPT to place a conservation easement on their property in 1998.

“Larry and Claudia bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to our board of directors, furthering our mission to protect our important lands, waters, and ranching heritage,” said Ben Lenth, Executive Director. “We’re thrilled to have them with us.”

The Gift of Land *continued from front page*

The gift of land is one of the best gifts a land trust can receive.

Both the Wheelers and the Osterkamps shared a vision for their land which they believed could be best stewarded by our organization. Their gifts of land are precious far beyond their monetary value, and represent incredible trust in San Isabel. We are humbled and amazed by their generosity.

In Colorado, we are still in the phase of land protection – a race against time to protect the lands and waters that are most important to us. Owning real estate brings responsibilities and challenges, and San Isabel Land Protection Trust must remain focused on new conservation acquisitions. As such, San Isabel determined that conservation easements were the most cost-effective tool to ensure the protection of the Wheeler and Osterkamp properties.

We believe that in many cases, privately owned lands enjoy the best stewardship and management practices, and we know that the conservation easements in place on these properties will ensure their integrity, and thus the legacy of the Wheeler and Osterkamp families, forever. The proceeds from selling these properties will allow us to multiply our conservation efforts to further our mission of protecting our lands and waters, and will be used with extreme care to strengthen the organization.

The board and staff of San Isabel Land Protection Trust extend our sincere gratitude to the Wheeler and Osterkamp families. These donations of land are far-sighted in their implications and deeply meaningful to our organization.

SILPT Staff Updates

Mike Downey has joined the San Isabel team as Land Protection Specialist thanks to a Colorado Open Lands Fellowship Program grant and from the support of individual donors. The two-year program matches great young talent with leading organizations that can meaningfully advance their work with the addition of a highly qualified staff member.

Mike will serve as a specialist in land protection and conservation easement stewardship. He will assist with protecting important and productive ranches, forests, and waters in our region, at a time when development pressures, and the complexities of conservation, are increasing.

Mike served as an intern for four summers at SILPT while attending University of California – Los Angeles where he received his undergraduate degrees in Political Science and Geography/Environmental Studies. In 2012, Mike graduated from the Sturm College of Law at the University of Denver, and passed the Colorado Bar in 2013.



Also joining the SILPT team is **Adam Belmonte**. As an Americorps VISTA (Volunteer in Service to America), Adam is leading the development of a strategic conservation plan for the four-county area where SILPT works. He is helping focus our efforts on protecting the lands and waters that matter most to our community.

Originally from Chicago, Adam has previously worked as an Educational Mentor for the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps in Steamboat Springs, CO, as a Riparian Restoration Project Coordinator for Coconino County Public Works Department in Flagstaff, AZ, and has traveled extensively providing him a broad perspective to apply to his work here.



Adam received his Master of Science in Geospatial Sciences from Northern Arizona University, concentrating his studies on geographic information systems (GIS), fresh water resource management, ecological restoration, and land-use planning. He received his Bachelors of Arts from Quinnipiac University in Connecticut.

Also, in September SILPT wished a heartfelt farewell to **Holly Wray**, Administrative Assistant. Holly worked with San Isabel for 6 years, was generous with her time and loved the mission and people at the land trust. Holly and her husband Dana intend to offer flood recovery and rebuilding support to residents in northern Colorado who have been impacted by the severe floods of this summer.

Photographs by Kate Hogins, Preservation Photography©2013

Wish List

- Fireproof filing cabinets
- Half-size rolling file cabinet
- Lightly used, 4WD, 4-door, pick-up truck or SUV, good condition.

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.



Peggy Kavookjian Recognized for Volunteer Service

Long time supporter and volunteer Peggy Kavookjian was awarded San Isabel's Inaugural Alice Proctor Volunteer of the Year Award in August during our annual Beer and Brats appreciation barbecue at the historic Brandenburg Ranch.

Peggy has worked with the land trust from its beginning, including helping to found Art for the Sangres which celebrated its 17th year on September 28. She also served as a Board Member and Treasurer until 2006 and continues to serve on the Land Preservation Committee. Peggy can often be found rolling up her sleeves to help SILPT staff with anything from administrative to logistical needs, monitoring and more. We truly appreciate Peggy's dedication, commitment and enthusiasm for land and water conservation.

The Alice Proctor of the Year Award will be given annually in the memory of founding SILPT board member Alice Proctor who contributed immeasurably to the formation of the land trust and was a part of every step to help build and strengthen the organization until her death in 2012.

Volunteers have been the core of our organization since our inception in 1995. Each year they donate thousands of hours of their time to ensure we fulfill our mission. We also wish to thank all of the volunteers from our years past who have contributed to the successful organization we are today.

2013 Monitoring is Complete!

Thank you to all of our conservation easement landowners, we had another successful year of monitoring. Over 25 volunteers and staff members headed out into the field this year to monitor 124 conservation easements as part of our obligation to ensure all of our conservation easements remain protected, in perpetuity. It's quite the undertaking and we appreciate the support of our landowners and volunteers!

Art for the Sangres a Wonderful Success

Over two days in late September, nearly 300 people enjoyed the 17th Art for the Sangres,



Photo by Hal Walter © 2013

our fine art sale and exhibition and one of the largest fundraisers for San Isabel each year. This year the show, as well as the sponsor and artist party the evening

prior, was held in a new location at A Painted View Ranch. For the first time in the history of the event, our Friday night sponsor party allowed for early bidding opportunities as well as dining on location amongst the art. Saturday evening included a catered wine reception, silent auction, and fixed price lottery sale.

The show welcomed 26 artists representing a variety of media including Navajo textiles, hand-forged ironwork, kiln fired glass, Southwestern

gourd maidens, and other favorites such as bronze sculpture, oil, acrylic and watercolor.

Artwork sales from the Saturday night party grossed over \$111,000 with 40% of net revenue to benefit San Isabel—nearly a 30% increase from last year. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our presenting sponsor Donna and Ralph Hood of A Painted View Ranch, our patrons, over 50 sponsors, the Custer County Middle School Cross Country team for providing excellent service during our Friday night sponsor party, and to our 50 volunteers who worked tirelessly throughout the year to put on our event.



Photo by Hal Walter © 2013

Spirit Campaign Matches Your Contribution

The annual “Spirit Campaign” hosted by the Wet Mountain Valley Community Foundation is underway. This annual program generates much needed operating funds for our organization. Now through December 31st your donation to SILPT will be matched pro-rata by the Foundation, up to \$1000!

Two Easy Ways to Donate!

Online

Please visit www.wmvcf.org and search for “San Isabel Land Protection Trust”. You may donate up to 8 non-profits during each transaction.

Mail-in

Donors may fill out the coupon enclosed in this newsletter and return it to:

The WMV Community Foundation
PO Box 718, Westcliffe CO 81252

Our land trust is primarily supported by the generosity of individual supporters such as you. Your involvement is critical to our work of protecting the wild and working landscape of our region. Thank you for your support!

We are proud to say that for every dollar you donate to our organization nearly 82 cents goes directly to our land and water conservation program.



Save the Date!
Hardscrabble Mountain Trail Run – Sunday, June 1, 2014

Photo by Jan Lee © 2013

Protect the adventure and run alongside the Tarahumara runners from Copper Canyon Mexico and help to preserve the landscapes we love during our 2nd Annual Hardscrabble Mountain Trail Run at Bear Basin Ranch. In addition to our 5k walk/run and 10k run, this year we are pleased to announce that we are adding a 50k for our ultra-running friends!

We hosted our inaugural race this past June and welcomed 270 registered racers which included four Raramuri (Tara-

humara) runners from Mexico, Maria Walton from Norway de Raramuri, Dave James Ultramarathoner Champion, as well as the participation from our local cross country youth runners. We'd like to extend a special thanks to Gary & Amy Ziegler for hosting this incredible event at Bear Basin Ranch. We look forward to 2014!

2014 registration opens soon.

Stay tuned: www.hardscrabblerrun.com

See you on the trail!

Shop with SILPT for the Holidays!

We have a collection of beautiful art and books available for sale. 100% of all proceeds go directly to San Isabel.

To shop, please visit our website: www.sanisabel.org or call 719.783.3018



Crossing Over by Sarah Woods © 2013



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