



BENCHM[▲]ARK

NEWS FROM SAN ISABEL LAND PROTECTION TRUST

SPRING/SUMMER 2013

Texas Creek Ranch: A Colorado Jewel Protected

By Kristie Nackord

Texas Creek Ranch, a premier cattle ranch in the Wet Mountain Valley with productive hayfields and pastures, senior water rights, and picturesque location close to Westcliffe, is now permanently protected with a conservation easement.

As one of the Valley's oldest productive ranches dating back to the 1870's, today it is leased by Rusk Ranches for their cattle ranching operations. The Ranch boasts commanding views of the 14,000-foot peaks of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the west and sweeping vistas of the Wet Mountain Range to the east. Pastoral hayfields are offset by aspen, willow and cottonwood stands, and vibrant meadows are thick with alpine wildflowers. With nearly 1.7 miles of Texas Creek running through the property, as well as several ponds, the property offers excellent wildlife habitat for elk, mule deer, antelope, turkey and more.

Texas Creek Ranch is part of a larger project that has been taking place in the Valley since 2002 – the Wet Mountain Valley Ranchland Preservation project. The WMVRPP is a



collaborative effort of local ranchers, San Isabel Land Protection Trust, and other conservation organizations to protect more than 12,000 acres of working ranchland in the Wet Mountain Valley. Texas Creek Ranch added 600 acres to the project.

“Texas Creek Ranch is very important for San Isabel and our entire community”, says Executive Director Ben Lenth. “This ranch, like many in our Valley, was vulnerable to development, particularly through current pressures on water rights holders to sell water rights for downstream industrial or municipal uses. When water is sold off the land, productivity plummets and subdivision becomes more likely – which impacts the quality of life for our entire Valley. The property has been in continuous agricultural use for 140 years and is an essential part of our ranching heritage. Now, this Colorado jewel is protected, forever”.





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E-mail: info@sanisabel.org
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Newsletter design: Jan Lee, Mind's Eye Creative

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

Don't Dry Up The Field That Feeds You



April in the Wet Mountain Valley – this morning was blanketed in snow. But only briefly, for as the sun rose and the newly arriving songbirds began to sing, the snow disappeared more quickly than it had arrived.

I don't think the Meadowlarks and Sparrows minded much – spring is springing, and snow be gone, they're ready to eat and build nests.

But by afternoon, the fields crackle underfoot. This deepening drought is a major stress for our landscape, our ecology and our economy. Moreover, it is a stress for our culture. Sixty-five percent snowpack in the Arkansas Basin makes it hard on everybody. Cities have declared water restrictions for the coming summer, and ranchers would try anything if just to make it snow. Both urban and rural Colorado are in a crunch: to quench the thirst of a growing population, we need more water. But there is less.

Clearly, there is a great need for water conservation on all fronts. Cities and industry will by necessity become more efficient, but in agriculture – which is the only viable source of additional water for development - it's more difficult.

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Disincentives to water efficiency in agriculture include “use it or lose it” water laws and the expenses of any changes. Regardless, if agriculture could use less water while maintaining productivity, there would be less pressure

on agricultural water to provide for all of society's expanding water needs.

Megan Hosterman's interview with Keith Hood illustrates innovative thinking in water conservation – tying water to the land, while allowing temporary leasing for other purposes. This is the middle ground we need, preventing the wholesale dry-up of farms and ranches, but with flexibility. Scaling up, large scale cooperative agreements can help meet the demands of both urban and rural water users. Cities must not dry up the fields that feed them, even during the drought.

Water is and always will be our most precious natural resource. Culturally, it may be as well. Three year old Lucy dances at the sight (or smell) of rain. I think the Meadowlarks might too.

-- Ben Lenth

Hardscrabble Mountain Trail Run 5k/10k – *Protect the adventure!*

Meet the challenge of the trail and celebrate Colorado Land Conservation Appreciation Week with San Isabel Land Protection Trust, Palmer Land Trust, and Tarahumara runners from Copper Canyon, Mexico to preserve the landscapes we love during the Hardscrabble Mountain Trail Run 5k/10k on June 2 at Bear Basin Ranch!

Let the sweeping, panoramic views of the Sangre de Cristos, Pikes Peak and the Wet Mountains inspire you to protect the adventure! Run or walk the mild and fun 5k route or attack the gnarly 10k course with friends and family, followed by food, drinks, and live music! Bear Basin Ranch will also be offering wagon rides, horseback rides, and guided walks throughout the day--sold separately.

Your entry fee will include:

- A FUN, challenging and adventuresome trail route on Bear Basin Ranch, a private, protected mountain ranch in Westcliffe, Colorado.
- Opportunity to run with a contingent of Tarahumara Indians from Mexico's Copper Canyon as featured in the New York Times Bestseller "Born to Run."
- "A Passion for Ranching" photo book by Bill Gillette and other wonderful items in your race swag bag.
- Post-race fiesta with live music, beer and gourmet lunch provided by "The Local."

2013 Artists

Mike Beeman
Julie Bender
Melissa Cooper
William Davis
Shane Dimmick
Adele Earnshaw
Joe Garcia
Josh Tobey
Jim Gilmore
David Grossman
Nancy & Mark Hargis
Paul Kethley
Kate Kiesler
Lorie Merfeld-Batson
JG Moore
Anita Mosher
Rock Newcomb
John Pyson
Cathy Sheeter
Greg Smith
Nathan Solano
Christopher Thompson
Mike Untiedt
Don Weller
Sarah Woods
Dinah Worman

17th Annual Art for the Sangres *Presented by A Painted View Ranch*



Artists and buyers from all over the Southwest will help to paint a brighter future for the Southern Colorado landscape at the 17th Annual Art for the Sangres Saturday, September 28, 2013.

Artists and buyers from all over the Southwest will help to paint a brighter future for the Southern Colorado landscape at the 17th Annual Art for the Sangres Saturday, September 28, 2013.

Regarded by many as one of the best art sales and exhibitions in Colorado, the event has many exciting new features this year including a new location at A Painted View Ranch, located just minutes from the Town of Westcliffe. The picturesque setting of the art sale with stunning views of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains will be accompanied by wine and delicious food.

This year we welcome eight new artists to our line-up who will be showcasing new and different artworks including fused

glass, antique and vintage southwest textiles, Native American jewelry, outdoor fine art, and gourds. We also welcome our returning favorites of beautiful landscapes, western art, and bronze sculptures.

Art for the Sangres is one of our largest fundraisers with 40% of all proceeds going to benefit San Isabel Land Protection Trust. Tickets to the event are \$50 and go on sale in July. Please visit www.artforthesangres.com for more information on our 2013 participating artists and event.

Date: Sunday June 2, 2013

Start: 10am followed by a post-race fiesta!

Location: Bear Basin Ranch, Westcliffe, CO

Entry: \$35 on or before May 24.

\$45 race day registration

Children 12 and under race free

To register: www.hardscrabblerrun.com



The race will benefit San Isabel Land Protection Trust, Palmer Land Trust, and the Tarahumara.

For more information visit: www.hardscrabblerrun.com or call 719.783.3018

A Practical Approach

By Megan Hosterman

“At some point [cities are] going to have to quit expanding — or quit expanding their use of water,” Rancher and longtime San Isabel Land Protection Trust Board Member Keith Hood replies when asked about the future of

water in the West. He adds, “[Cities] are going to start cutting into food production because non-irrigated agriculture isn’t going to supply adequate food.” Hood, who has spent his entire life ranching in the Wet Mountain Valley, is skeptical about the future of ranching in Colorado as growing cities in the Front Range continue to require the transfer and use of agricultural water from the rural ranching communities.



The importance of water in Colorado is clear. Agricultural water in the state supports 36,700 farms and ranches, generates over \$40 billion in annual revenue, and supports 173,000 jobs that feed that state and country. In addition, irrigated agricultural land in the state protects iconic scenery, provides important wildlife habitat, and preserves nationally-sought after hunting and fishing opportunities.

“There has to be a balance between growth and producing food for these people to eat. If [cities] keep gobbling up our farmland we’re not going to be able to produce that food... and they’re not going to eat too well.”

Hood’s concerns are well-founded. The State’s population and municipal and industrial water demands are expected to double to 7.2 million people and 446 billion gallons, respectively, by 2050. Currently, a quarter of the water used by Colorado municipalities and industry is trans-

ferred from irrigated ranchlands in the Arkansas and South Platte River basins. As these demands have grown, many ranchers have sold their land and water, a trend which has led to 75 acres of agricultural land lost each day in Colorado. When asked about water being sold out of the Wet Mountain Valley by other landowners, Hood stresses, “It’s their property and they can do what they want with it, but water is important in our valley. Particularly if it’s agricultural water – once it’s gone from agriculture you’re never going to get it back.”

Many ranchers share Hood’s sentiment and have chosen to protect their livelihoods and the region’s ranching heritage by utilizing conservation easements to protect land and water despite the potential one-time financial gain of selling water. Conservation easements prohibit property from being subdivided and water rights from being sold, and are the most widely used and strongest tool to tie water to land. Conservation easements convey certain property rights to the land trust, which can generate significant income through state and federal tax benefits. San Isabel Land Protection Trust encourages flexible terms that help landowners utilize their assets.

The Hood Family, who has ranched in the valley since 1870, protected their 500-acre ranch with San Isabel Land Protection Trust in 2006. Hood says the family chose to use a conservation easement in order to protect the ranch from future development. “Particularly my mom didn’t ever want to see the land divided, she wanted to see the land stay in agriculture. Also, my daughter was in favor of the conservation easement. She didn’t want to see our land developed.”

A staunch critic of urban sprawl and a devoted rancher, Keith Hood never considered selling his water, but did want the flexibility to use it in

Financial Report

Recap of Fiscal Year March 31, 2013

by Lynn Karantz, Treasurer

We are pleased to report our unaudited results of operations for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2013:

creative ways. The terms of the Hood Ranch conservation easement allow for intermittent leasing of protected water rights to whoever would lease them, for 3 out of every 10 years. This flexibility facilitates short-term water leases between agricultural irrigators and urban municipal suppliers, which can allow agricultural producers to capitalize on the value of water rights without permanently separating water from the land. In addition, short-term leases can be used to satisfy In-Stream Flows, which are water rights appropriated to Colorado rivers in order to sustain healthy watersheds. Hood says, "I haven't exercised the right [to lease short-term] and haven't even thought about it. There hasn't been enough water to think about it. It was put in there as a future possible revenue stream. You can't predict what will happen in the future."

As water demands in Colorado continue to strain relationships between historical agricultural uses and the booming growth of cities and businesses, conservation easements are an increasingly valuable tool to keep rural water on rural lands. The immediate financial benefit to the landowner and the ongoing benefit to the surrounding community when land and water are protected by a conservation easement make practical sense. The Hood Family ranch illustrates San Isabel Land Protection Trust's ability to work with landowners to accommodate the changing needs of agricultural livelihoods while forever protecting Colorado's unparalleled quality of life.

Data used in this article was provided by State of Colorado, Western Resource Advocates, Summit Economic with The Adams Group, and American Farmland Trust.

UNAUDITED YEAR END MARCH 31, 2013					
	RESTRICTED			TOTAL	FY 11-12
	Unrestricted	Stewardship	Endowment		
Revenues					
Earned revenue	71,813	60,559	319	132,691	143,096
Contributions support	135,908	8,000		143,908	91,963
	\$ 207,721	\$ 68,559	\$ 319	\$ 276,599	\$ 235,059
Expenses	\$ 208,443	\$ 34,197		\$ 242,640	\$ 178,600
Increase (decrease) in net assets	(722)	34,362	319	33,959	56,459
Net assets at end of year	\$ 461,568	\$ 687,710	\$ 30,319	\$ 1,179,597	\$ 1,145,638

As Treasurer, I work closely with our Executive Director to prepare the budget for the upcoming fiscal year. We always work to have a balanced budget, especially with our unrestricted funds. As we were preparing the budget last year, with many economic uncertainties remaining, I knew that it would take the loyal support of all of you to achieve our goal. And, once again, your continued belief in our mission has made this happen! Thanks to all of you who support our organization through financial contributions and volunteering your time.

With the 2013 fiscal year budget we are projecting increased spending as the costs and complexity of our work increase. We are setting correspondingly ambitious goals for generating revenue, with more conservation easement closings and increased revenue from other sources. We ask that you keep us in mind when you think of donating land, appreciated stocks, or other planned giving opportunities. Large gifts such as these truly enhance our sustainability and ability to increase the pace of conservation in our region.

Thank you to our 2012 s

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Rocky Mountain Council, Boy Scouts
of America
Larry and Anne Gerdes

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Wendell & Michele Engle

Wish List

- Fireproof filing cabinets
- One iPad for our monitoring program and other operations
- Raffle items for the Hardscrabble Mountain Trail Run on June 2
- Sponsorships for Art for the Sangres and/or Hardscrabble Mountain Trail Run

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

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Conserve paper and receive periodic updates from SILPT via email!

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

Sponsors and support needed - a win-win for all!

Be part of something extraordinary! Support San Isabel Land Protection Trust by becoming a sponsor of the Hardscrabble Mountain Trail Run and/or Art for the Sangres this year.

Our sponsorship packages are designed so that everyone wins! Very reasonably priced, sponsors can participate at any level their budget will allow. You will have the opportunity to have your business name in front of hundreds of people during our events and thousands of people during our promotional outreach. Your kindness and dollars will go directly to protecting land and water in Southern Colorado.

A Special Thanks!

A special thanks to Dan Ballard for allowing SILPT to use his beautiful photography in our marketing and promotional materials. Dan is passionate about conservation and our region, please check his website at: www.danballardphotography.com

Photo by Dan Ballard © 2013

To receive a sponsorship package or to learn how you can become a sponsor of the Hardscrabble Mountain Trail Run or Art for the Sangres, please contact:

Kristie Nackord
San Isabel Land Protection Trust
PO Box 124 • Westcliffe, CO 81252
719.783.3018 • kristie@sanisabel.org



Volunteers Needed!

Volunteers are the backbone of our organization. Without your on-going support we would not be where we are today. We have many volunteer opportunities this year and we need your help!

Hardscrabble Mountain Trail Run
Art for the Sangres
Office assistance
Photography
Graphic design
Internships

If you are interested in offering your knowledge and skills in any capacity to help protect land and water in our community, please contact us!

Contact: Kristie Nackord
Development Coordinator
Kristie@SanIsabel.org
719.783.3018



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