

EAGLE POST 49

The newsletter of **ESWA - EAGLE SUMMIT WILDERNESS ALLIANCE** apprises you of important activities in and around Eagles Nest, Holy Cross, and Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness Areas.

EagleSummitWilderness.org

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BEFORE WE BEGIN... Starting June 1, after completion of required re-certification, our Volunteer Wilderness Rangers (VWRs) will be out on patrol (with suitable pandemic-related precautions). VWRs who have not yet completed this year's re-certification process, please contact ESWA Chair Mike Browning to complete the simple (but required by the USFS) process. Unfortunately, our four backcountry overnight work trips are postponed to 2021, as is Training Day for our several dozen new VWR recruits. However, all is not lost for them: they will have opportunities to accompany returning VWRs as observers on patrols, so that they will be experienced and primed for Training Day in 2021. You can apply [HERE](#).

June 2020

Dear *|FNAME|*

Greetings! Our topic this month:
The Eagle Valley Land Trust

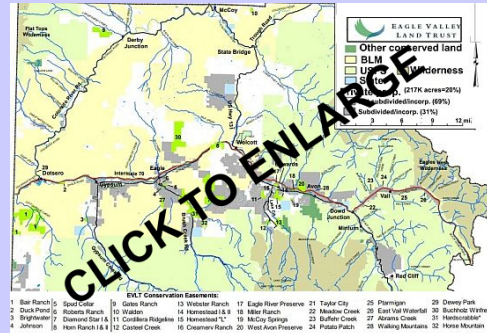
By Bergen Tjossem
Deputy Director



INTRODUCTION

The classic case of a **conservation easement** is the ranch or farm family who finds their property taxes going through the roof as their land relentlessly increases in value as population soars and developers covet their land, bidding up offers to buy. Working with a

Land Trust to create a conservation easement, the family can afford to stay on the land, which is protected in perpetuity from development. More than a thousand Land Trust organizations exist in the US ([map](#)). Their accomplishments are truly stunning, particularly given their relatively low profile compared to many other conservation organizations. For example, while the great majority of Land Trusts have been created only in the past few decades, they have succeeded in conserving 56,000,000 acres - that's a bit more than all of the designated Wilderness in the lower 48 states. This, in spite of the fact that about half of Land Trusts are all-volunteer organizations (more than half of the remainder have just one paid staff member). Their relatively low profile is explained in part due to the nature of the target - individual landowners - so that mass rallies are not useful, as they can be for protecting public lands. The **Eagle Valley Land Trust (EVLT)**, the subject of this month's newsletter, works diligently to preserve local lands; their impressive portfolio of conserved properties is shown on the map ([click to enlarge](#)).



As EVLT Deputy Director **Bergen Tjossem** explains, a longtime growth trend continues as every day on average three acres of land in Eagle County are lost to development. Bergen describes how EVLT works with a wide variety of stakeholders and interested citizens to help conservation-minded landowners find equitable and satisfying solutions to their desire to preserve their land. This is not simply an organization of lawyers sitting and drafting complex legal documents. They do that, of course, but they also are deeply engaged in community activities. Bergen describes, for example, EVLT's **Future Conservationists** Project, "designed to inspire the next generation of stewards, conservationists, and nature advocates."

This is the first of two issues devoted to EVLT's work. This first installment will acquaint you in general with the work that they do - a kind of Land Trusts for Dummies. The next installment, in a few months, will address a specific project: the campaign to buy and preserve the beautiful [Sweetwater Lake Ranch](#).

Conserving the Lands We Love with the Eagle Valley Land Trust

By Bergen Tjossem

Deputy Director

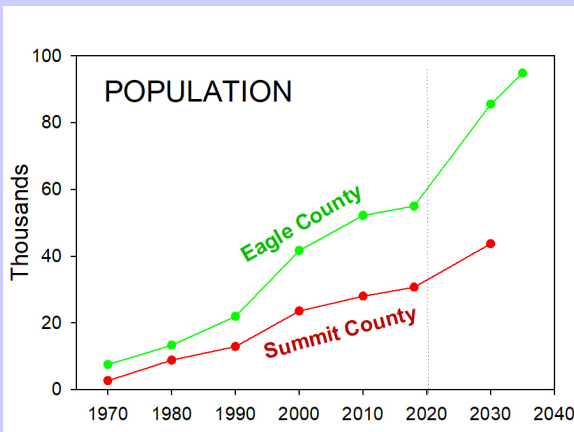
The Eagle River Valley has undergone a massive transformation over the last 70 years. Beginning in the 1960's, Eagle County's landscapes began to shift from widespread ranchland to an internationally renowned, recreation-based tourist destination. Towards the late seventies, longtime local Roger Tilkemeier and Forest Ranger Don Price saw the economic and recreational potential of the Eagle River Valley. Roger and Don recognized that a resort industry taking off without careful community planning could undermine the foundation – the open



spaces, scenic views, thriving wildlife habitats, and iconic western heritage – that brought it success in the first place. To help protect the natural bounty that the local community and economy depended on, they founded the Eagle Valley Land Trust (EVLT) in 1981, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to

the wise conservation of open space, wildlife habitat, ranches, and recreational opportunities for locals and visitors alike. The new land trust model was well-suited for that role. By using innovative tools and partnership to conserve land that the community cared about most, they could begin to find that balance. That said, the work has only just begun.

EVLT, one of over 30 [accredited](#) land trusts in Colorado, has facilitated the protection of over 11,200 acres across 36 properties via conservation easements, including 20 with public access featuring [34.8 miles of trails](#). These easements also include 10 miles of river corridor and riparian habitat, over 10,116 acres of wildlife habitat, 6,396 acres of scenic vistas, and three working ranches. (click on map to see our holdings)



On average, three acres of land are developed in Eagle County every day. That rate will only increase; our county's population is expected to double to 100,000 people within 35 years. That is why the Eagle Valley Land Trust's work to protect the lands and rivers that sustain our community must continue. For over 38 years, EVLT has conserved land within Eagle County for the use and enjoyment of future generations. EVLT's

mission, though constantly evolving to fit the needs of our community, has always been to protect forever the lands we love; to preserve our heritage, scenic beauty, recreational opportunities, wildlife habitats, and to build a permanent legacy for future generations.

Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust that protects land in

OUR IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS



perpetuity; it has always been EVLT's primary conservation tool. These agreements, which are legally binding in perpetuity, have been used to conserve 20 million acres (the size of South Carolina) around the country by

over 1,300 accredited land trusts. Locally, conservation easements can be used to assist landowners in protecting their land or ranches; to allow towns and counties to permanently protect open spaces that they've purchased with public funds; to provide families the peace of mind that their land can be passed down through generations in an healthy state; by communities to protect vulnerable wildlife habitats; and for many other purposes.



Key to the conservation easement equation is their voluntary nature. Partnership is paramount. Each conservation easement is unique - it is customized and catered to the landowner's needs and long term vision for their property. While the original owner retains ownership of the land, the easement typically limits development, subdivision, and significant alteration. For example, some of the easements that EVLT holds limit the property owner's building opportunities to a specific geographic footprint. Some conservation easements allow private or commercial hunting or fishing. If the conservation easement is along the river with a substantial riparian zone, mowing of the riparian vegetation may be prohibited. Some conservation easements may allow for public access. The value of a conservation easement is equal to the decrease in market value of the property after the easement is created – the more rights voluntarily given up by the landowner to be held in trust, the higher the value of the easement.



When landowners choose to protect their land, whether they decide to allow public access or not, everyone in the community benefits, including wildlife and neighbors. Conserved land can help protect watersheds and critical habitats; scenic viewsheds; access to nature; western heritage and ranching; recreational opportunities and access; and other important attributes that our communities and local economies depend on. Landowners can receive significant compensation from funders or tax benefits from the

state and federal government - usually about 50-100% of the value of the conservation easement.

Local Conservation Focus

Rapid population growth and the associated development will continue to have significant impacts on our community and environment. Local residents, and especially underrepresented youth, have been cut off from natural areas through rapid development



throughout the region. Many youth-focused nonprofit organizations have struggled to find locations to deliver programming in the Eagle Valley due to rapid development and lack of easily accessible public lands near schools and neighborhoods.

Rapid development has also had significant consequences for our region's wildlife populations, including elk and deer, whose populations have plummeted by 50% in the last 20 years due in part to habitat loss and fragmentation. Winter habitats - lower elevation areas within river valleys that typically receive less snowfall - are growing particularly scarce due to their higher development potential.

EVLT's conservation work focuses on protecting lands that meet needs of our community and wildlife. For our community, that means protecting open spaces near where people live and work so everyone can enjoy nature's diverse benefits. [Miller Ranch Open Space](#), [Minturn Boneyard Open Space](#), and [Abrams Creek Open Space](#) are all examples of lands protected by EVLT that are [easily accessible to local residents and guests](#). For wildlife, that means protecting critical winter habitat, migration corridors, and working collaboratively with partners to build wildlife friendly management plans. Examples of critical wildlife habitat protected by EVLT include [Bair Ranch](#), the [Eagle River Preserve](#), the [Brush Creek Valley Ranch and Open Space](#), and the [West Avon Preserve](#). In addition, EVLT is actively involved in the Safe Passages for Wildlife Project, building awareness around seasonal trail closures, and educating local youth on the importance of giving wildlife space.

Community Conservation

The Eagle Valley Land Trust's Community Conservation initiative provides more to our region than conserved land alone - it leverages protected land to meet needs in our



community, connect nonprofit services, encourage collaboration, and provide

unique opportunities for local youth to connect with nature.

Future Conservationists, EVLT's signature youth program, is an integral piece of our Community Conservation program. Designed to inspire the next generation of stewards, conservationists, and nature advocates, Future Conservationists guides students in their own backyard - our local protected open spaces - to engage with nature, ponder the merits of protected land, learn what it means to be a steward, and enjoy unstructured play outdoors. By partnering with the



Eagle Valley Outdoor Movement (EVOM), EVLT's Future Conservationists program is helping local immigrant communities access nearby protected lands like the Eagle River Preserve, conserved by EVLT in 2005, by addressing barriers like transportation, safety, physical infrastructure, and know-how. When local youth feel empowered to use and benefit

from protected lands in their community, they'll be more likely to appreciate the value of conservation, open spaces, and a healthy environment so they can help protect the lands they care about most.

EVLT's land conservation work and Community Conservation initiative cannot be done alone. EVLT works with a diverse group of local businesses, nonprofit organizations, volunteers, and government agencies to provide these services - free of charge - to our region's residents and guests so that everyone can enjoy the benefits of nature; immerse in local history, heritage, and culture; take pride in our natural surroundings; and ultimately leave a legacy of conservation for all future generations to enjoy, *forever*. To learn more about the Eagle Valley Land Trust, visit www.evlt.org or email bergen@evlt.org. Stay up to date with EVLT's conservation work by signing up for our [newsletter](#) and following EVLT on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

ABOUT BERGEN TJSSEM

Bergen Tjossem is the Eagle Valley Land Trust's deputy

director. After growing up in Eagle County, he has returned home to help protect the lands and wildlife that raised him. After graduating from the University of Denver's environmental science program, Bergen spent time working in Glacier National Park, Costa Rica, and Panama before completing a Master's degree at Colorado State University's Conservation Leadership program. Bergen currently lives in West Vail where he indulges an ongoing passion for the Gore Range.



A huge thanks to [ARAPAHOE BASIN SKI AREA](#). For more than two decades, A-Basin staff have donated generously to their **Employee Environmental Fund**, of which ESWA has been a steady beneficiary. Last year, more than 150 employees donated, led by A-Basin Director **Alan Henceroth**. Our enduring THANKS!

Make a donation to ESWA...



... make a difference!

Check out other [recent monthly eNewsletters](#)



The Spring-Summer 2020 hard copy newsletter was just mailed. it is chock full of information about our 2020 season and the adjustments due to the pandemic. If you didn't receive your copy, then *we don't have your mailing address*. Please [send an email](#) to us with your mailing address. The newsletter contains about two dozen fun and

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Join us! Next Planning Meeting Thursday, JUNE 11 at 5:30 PM, The meeting will probably be held virtually, via Zoom. To join us, send us an [email](#) and we'll send the Zoom link.

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Please [register](#) your City Market Value Card, linking it to FENW, which will send rebates to us without compromising your earned fuel points. Please note that each card holder may only sign up for one tax exempt organization. **THANKS!**

informative articles about us - past,
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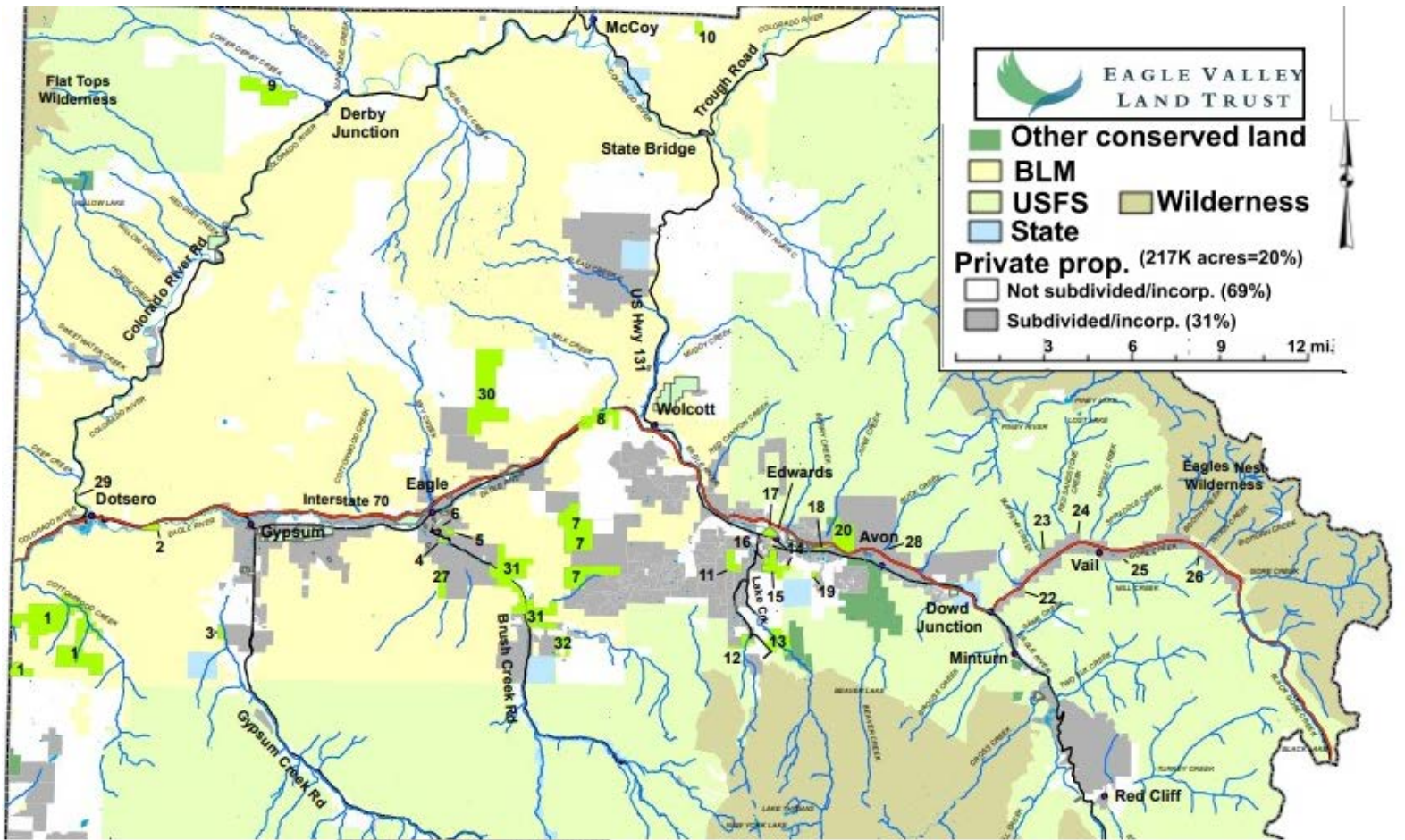
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EVLT Conservation Easements:

1 Bair Ranch	5 Spud Cellar	9 Gates Ranch	13 Webster Ranch	17 Eagle River Preserve	21 Taylor City	25 Ptarmigan	29 Dewey Park
2 Duck Pond	6 Roberts Ranch	10 Walden	14 Homestead I & II	18 Miller Ranch	22 Meadow Creek	26 East Vail Waterfall	30 Buchholz Winfrey
3 Brightwater	7 Diamond Star I &	11 Cordillera Ridgeline	15 Homestead "L"	19 McCoy Springs	23 Buffehr Creek	27 Abrams Creek	31 Hardscrabble*
4 Johnson	8 Horn Ranch I & II	12 Casteel Creek	16 Creamerv Ranch	20 West Avon Preserve	24 Potato Patch	28 Walking Mountains	32 Horse Mountain