

President's Letter

New Conservation Partnership



Dan Pike
President

Tom Kaesemeyer of the [Gates Family Foundation](#) used to complain to me, “we get so many good proposals from so many land trusts, how do we know which to fund?” I assured him he couldn’t go wrong funding those with the Colorado Open Lands logo, but he seemed to want more. But Tom’s question illustrates the obvious: There’s more land worth preserving than there are resources to do the job. The Colorado Conservation Trust has identified the need to protect two million acres of land by the year 2015, while 2006 funding actually fell 13% from 2004 levels.

If we’re going to achieve this conservation objective, several things will be necessary: First, we’re going to have to identify the best and most strategic lands to protect; second, we need to bring adequate land conservation expertise to these areas; and, third, we must generate sufficient resources, both human and financial, for the effort.

On April 23rd, a project to meet this challenge was launched with the announcement of the [Colorado Conservation Partnership](#). The “**Keep it Colorado**” project represents the collaborative efforts of five land conservation organizations – [Colorado Open Lands](#), [The Trust For Public Land](#), [Colorado Conservation Trust](#), [The Conservation Fund](#), and [The Nature Conservancy](#) – along with numerous local partners, to protect twenty-four of the most important landscapes in Colorado.

Recognizing its importance, the Gates Family Foundation provided initial funding for the project, which began with the collection of statewide Geographic Information System (GIS) data on a wide variety of important natural and physical resources. Next, the information was vetted with local organizations and individuals in ten regional workshops across Colorado. Fifty areas were initially identified, and subsequently reduced to [twenty-four priority landscapes](#) that include remote natural areas, urban open spaces, working farms and ranches, and scenic views of prairie expanses and majestic mountain tops.



In creating this collaboration, the Partners have committed to bring the various strengths and competencies of each organization to the task. For example, we look forward to working with The Nature Conservancy and the Palmer Land Trust in the Peak to Prairie landscape, while we

have joined forces with the Trust for Public Land and The Conservation Fund to develop a comprehensive approach to land protection in the Denver metropolitan area. This coordinated approach that combines the specific expertise of the various national, state and local partners will significantly enhance the effectiveness of land protection, both statewide and at a landscape level.

We hope this focused effort will allow us to increase the amount of land and conservation easement donations in the identified landscapes. This ambitious vision will also be a catalyst for increased private conservation philanthropy as well as new public funding opportunities. Additionally, the Colorado Conservation Partnership has created a fund that offers foundations and individuals a straightforward way to achieve these far-reaching results.

Unique in approach and scale, **the Colorado Conservation Partnership** leverages the diverse missions, resources, and collective expertise of five of Colorado's leading conservation organizations, along with dozens of local partners, to pursue the greatest possible conservation impact in the coming decade. And, if we're lucky, we may just answer Tom Kaesemeyer's question along the way.