

Colorado Conservation Partnership: KEEP IT COLORADO

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Colorado Conservation Partnership Awards \$2 Million in Grants To Accelerate Wildlife Habitat Conservation in Colorado

DENVER, CO, October 1, 2008 -- The Colorado Conservation Partnership (CCP) today announced that it has awarded grants to five Colorado land trust organizations whose land conservation projects advance the goals and objectives of the Colorado State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). The five grants total \$2 million and are part of the funding CCP received from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation to help implement the on-the-ground wildlife conservation projects that Colorado and four other western states identified as priorities in their plans.

The CCP comprises five of Colorado's leading conservation organizations - Colorado Conservation Trust, **Colorado Open Lands**, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Land – that have united to pursue the greatest possible conservation impact for Colorado and created a bold plan to preserve 24 high-priority landscapes.

“The five CCP organizations are committed to finding and making available private financial resources that can be used to match public resources for conservation projects in each of these 24 landscapes, said CCP spokesperson Chris Herrman. “We are pleased to make these awards, as we begin work on our far-reaching conservation vision to preserve Colorado's iconic landscapes for the decades to come.”

In an April 2008 event featuring Colorado Governor Bill Ritter, CCP rolled out its ambitious “Keep It Colorado” plan to preserve 24 priority landscapes across Colorado encompassing over 700,000 acres. As a result of CCP's collaboration with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation of New York granted \$2 million to protect high priority wildlife habitats within the 24 landscapes. Grant recipients were chosen based on the impact of their projects to support wildlife conservation values within these high priority landscapes. The recipients are:

** THE MESA LAND TRUST, Rob Bleiberg, Executive Director, 970-263-5443.

Project: Funding a conservation easement acquisition on a 3,758 acre working ranch atop Pinyon Mesa on Glade Park. The ranch contains remarkable and pristine habitat of rolling sagebrush and aspen-topped hills overlooking Unaweep Canyon. The mixed sagebrush, aspen rangeland, and pinyon-juniper habitats, home

to several species of special concern, as well as the historic family ranching operation, will be permanently protected.

** COLORADO CATTLEMEN'S AGRICULTURAL LAND TRUST, Chris West, Executive Director, 303-225-8677.

Project: Protect three working ranches in North Park covering more than 2,849 acres of significant wildlife habitat and productive agricultural land. North Park communities are actively supporting conservation options, and in the face of rapidly growing development pressure, the four ranches are acting as a catalyst for a rare, landscape level conservation opportunity in one of Colorado's last unspoiled mountain valleys.

** RIO GRANDE HEADWATERS LAND TRUST, Nancy Butler, Executive Director, 719-852-4015.

Project: A conservation easement to ensure permanent protection of six miles of the Rio Grande that meander through the spectacular 1,100 acre Rio Oxbow Ranch. The Rio Oxbow's forested uplands, broad irrigated meadows, and extensive river corridor, ponds and wetlands provide critical habitat for the endangered Lynx, as well as high quantity and quality of habitat for two other high-priority endangered species, the Boreal Toad and the Bald Eagle, along with important fisheries and big game habitat.

** SAN ISABEL LAND PROTECTION TRUST, Brian Riley, Executive Director, 719-783-3018.

Project: Protect a diverse 3,800-acre ranch in the southern Wet Mountain Valley of south-central Colorado, one of Colorado's last undeveloped high mountain valleys.

The Music Meadows Ranch lies next to the San Isabel National Forest and contains exceptional wildlife habitat along with impressive scenic and agricultural values. It is a unique opportunity to add significant acreage to the 14,000 acres already protected in the Wet Mountain Valley.

** GUNNISON RANGLAND CONSERVATION LEGACY, Lucy Goehl, Executive Director, 970-641-4386.

Project: Fund two conservation easements covering 890 acres of ranchlands, to complement large tracts of private land that have already been protected by conservation easements in the Gunnison basin.

A conservation easement on a 300-acre ranch in the Tomichi Creek Valley will protect private ranchland which provides critical nesting and brood-rearing habitat for the Gunnison sage-grouse, as does an easement on a 590-acre ranch in the Ohio Creek Valley. The Gunnison sage-grouse is described in the Colorado Wildlife Action Plan as a Species of the Greatest Conservation Need.

The Colorado Conservation Partnership envisions a Colorado in which the state's finest farming and ranching lands, unique wildlife habitats, world-renown recreational landscapes, scenic vistas and open spaces are permanently protected for current and

future generations. The 24 priority landscapes are unique and special places that define the people of Colorado, including, remote natural areas where we get away to backpack, hike, ski, climb or bike; open spaces at the urban edge; working farms and ranches that allow us to buy local; wild lands; and uninterrupted views of majestic mountaintops.

CCP will create a comprehensive conservation vision for each landscape. The Partnership's mission is to develop and implement more robust conservation plans, get more acres protected, through full integration of the CCP organizations in strong partnership with local land conservation groups.

The mission of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation is to improve the quality of people's lives through grants supporting the performing arts, environmental conservation, medical research and the prevention of child maltreatment, and through preservation of the cultural and environmental legacy of Doris Duke's properties.

For more information about the CCP's ambitious vision, strategic approach, and unprecedented array of partners, and why the collaboration is so vital to conserving the natural values and outdoor experiences that define Colorado, please visit www.keepitcolorado.org.

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