

Colorado Conservation Partnership: KEEP IT COLORADO

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Leading Colorado Conservation Groups Unite for Long Range Plan to Achieve Greatest Conservation Impact

DENVER, CO, April 23, 2008 -- Recognizing the need for a comprehensive vision to address the critical challenges Colorado faces as a state, five of Colorado's leading conservation organizations - Colorado Conservation Trust, The Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund and Colorado Open Lands – announced today an unprecedented collaboration and far-reaching conservation vision to preserve Colorado's iconic landscapes for the decades to come.

In a roll-out event introducing the new Colorado Conservation Partnership (CCP), more than 250 supporters joined Colorado Governor Bill Ritter and a roster of top-ranking conservation, business and community leaders, as they expressed support for the CCP vision, and spoke about their personal connection to Colorado's magnificent lands and the urgent reasons to act now to preserve them.

“This is a new chapter in conservation history,” said U.S. Senator Ken Salazar in a taped statement at the event.

Charles Bedford, Colorado State Director of The Nature Conservancy, framed the program, detailing CCP's ambitious plan to preserve 24 priority landscapes and a mission to “Keep It Colorado”.

The Partnership envisions a Colorado in which our finest working farms and ranches, unique wildlife habitats, world-renowned recreational landscapes, scenic vistas and open spaces are permanently protected for current and future generations. To best accomplish this attainable but daunting challenge, CCP will leverage the diverse missions, resources, and collective expertise of each organization -- in strong partnerships with local land conservation organizations and open space programs -- to pursue the greatest possible conservation impact in the coming decade.

“The conservation community finds itself at a strategic crossroads as “low hanging fruit” is gone and land protection transactions are becoming increasingly complex,” said Doug Robotham, Deputy Director at Colorado Conservation Trust, who has been integral to the creation of CCP. “The Partnership is uniting conservation groups that previously worked in geographic and programmatic isolation so that public and private funding requests are coordinated and result in the greatest cumulative conservation impact.”

“The need to act has never been more urgent,” said Bedford. “We must pool the financial resources and vast expertise of the lead organizations, in partnership with local groups, and bring a new level of attention to Colorado's conservation agenda.”

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Through the partnership, 24 landscapes across Colorado encompassing over 700,000 acres have been selected as conservation priority landscapes. The landscapes were selected based on five key attributes of value to Coloradans:

- wildlife habitat/biologically significant lands
- working farms and ranches
- recreational areas
- scenic vistas
- community separators.

Additional luminaries delivering testimonials and endorsement statements at the event were Colorado Conservation Trust Chair Michael Dowling, Executive Director of the Gates Family Foundation Tom Kaesemeyer, Mesa Land Trust Executive Director Rob Bleiberg, John Malone, Chairman of Liberty Media Corporation, and noted photographer John Fielder.

Colorado arguably has some of the finest landscapes in the world – mountains, prairies, desert and more -- and while we are a leader in landscape conservation with over two-million acres of private land protected statewide, some of the richest, most beautiful acreage in our state remains unprotected. With Colorado's population estimated to grow by 100,000 each year, the demand for land development to serve the influx increasingly threatens these treasured farmlands, natural lands, and open spaces that make Colorado, Colorado.

Illustrating the collaborative process, the CCP “Keep It Colorado” vision coordinates with the priorities of the Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW) as they accelerate implementation of the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). DOW has incorporated the 24 landscapes that comprise the CCP vision into its latest request for proposals for land conservation funding. DOW will be making as much as \$15 million available to protect habitats within these landscapes that are essential for sustaining game and non-game species alike.

In addition, the Division of Wildlife has amended the State of Colorado's SWAP to include the “Keep It Colorado” landscapes as focal areas for private land conservation. Doing so has resulted in a commitment by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation of New York to grant a further \$2 million to protect high priority wildlife habitats within the 24 priority landscapes.

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

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