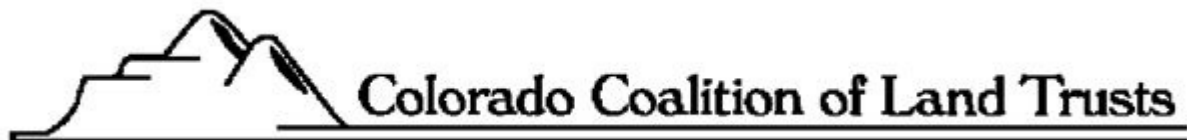


From: Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts <kstaks@cclt.org>
Subject: Conservation News - April Edition
Reply: kstaks@cclt.org



Conservation News

Volume 3

April 2007

In This Issue

HB 1361 Through House
Proposal to Securitize Lottery
Newsletter Subtitle
Newsletter Subtitle
Helicopter Flights for
Conservation
Land Trust Accreditation

Conservation in the News

Half of Colo. Land Protected,
April 17, 2007,
Rocky Mountain News

[Click here](#)

*44% of State Land is Open
Space,*
April 17, 2007,
Colorado Springs Gazette

[Click here](#)

*County Not Sweating
Easement Crackdown,*
April 14, 2007,
Longmont FYI

[Click here](#)

*Bill Targets Tax Abuses of
Land Conservation,*
April 10, 2007,
The Denver Post

[Click here](#)

*The IRS Goes Trust Busting in
Colorado,*
April 9, 2007,
Ecosystem Marketplace

[Click here](#)

Loving the Open Space,
April 4, 2007,
Grand Junction Free Press

[Click here](#)

Easements Protect River,
March 27, 2007,
Cortez Journal

HB 1361 Passes Through House With a 65-0 Vote!

House Bill 1361, a Bill to Verify Conservation Easement Tax Credits, has seen success so far! It passed through the House Finance Committee with an 11-0 vote, passed through the second reading in front of the full House, then passed through the third reading with a 65-0 vote! The bill will most likely go to committee in the Senate during the week of April 23-27. This is a great time to thank your Representatives for their support of the bill and ask your Senators to vote yes!

The CCLT would especially like to thank House Majority Leader Alice Madden for her leadership on this bill, as well as co-sponsors Representatives Michael Garcia and Kathleen Curry and Senators Jim Isgar and Josh Penry for co-sponsoring it in the Senate. We would also like to thank Will Shafroth and Larry Kueter for their tireless efforts to make this bill happen and to Kevin Shea and Bill Fales for testifying in front of the House Finance Committee. Your efforts and voices have been critical and the entire conservation community thanks you! Check out our [website](#) for a summary of the bill and background on the conservation easement tax credit program.

GOCO and NREL Release COMaP Version 6 and Statewide Open Space Inventory

The Natural Resource Ecology Lab (NREL), in conjunction with Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), is pleased to announce the release of COMaP Version 6 and Colorado's first statewide inventory of open space. The Colorado Ownership, Management, and Protection (COMaP) project at the NREL was started to build a statewide protected areas database for Colorado. COMaP is being undertaken with funding and technical assistance from GOCO. Version 6 has additional attributes to track GOCO participation, attributes to more fully track conservation easement acquisition, and updated datasets for many organizations.

The inventory provides consistent, current, and comprehensive information about the status and trends of open space lands in the state and detailed maps with a comprehensive set of attributes associated with each parcel. Roughly 1.8 million acres in Colorado are locally protected by city and county governments and land trusts through both conservation easements and fee title ownership. For each protected area of land, the researchers collected data about the agency that owns and/or manages the land, the date it was protected, the type of conservation mechanism applied to protect the land and researchers noted whether public access was allowed on the lands. Some of the results from the study include:

- Local protection by land trusts and local governments accounts for 1,780,856 acres or approximately 3% of Colorado, an area roughly four times the size of Rocky Mountain National Park.
- A little over half of these acres have predominately protected agricultural lands, and slightly more than a third have protected natural area/wildlife habitat.
- Since 2000, the number of acres of land protected by conservation easements has more than doubled.

[Click here](#) for the full report, technical details of the COMaP project, and downloadable Google Earth KML files produced from COMaP data.

If you would like to receive COMaP Version 6, please read the [data disclaimer](#) and state your agreement to the disclaimer in an e-mail to comap@nrel.colostate.edu.

[Click here](#)

Tell us more!

We're proud of the conservation work done in Colorado and we want to showcase it. Send us your stories, newspaper clippings, events, job postings and pictures so we can include them in the next newsletter!

Email kstaks@cclt.org

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State Policy News

Governor Ritter Signs Senate Bill 98 into Law - Counties Benefit from Open Space Sales Tax Exemption



The Trust for Public Land joined a state-wide celebration of the passage of Senate Bill 98 - the Open Space Sales Tax Exemption - as a long-awaited turning point for conservation funding in Colorado. The bill was sponsored by Senate President Joan Fitz-Gerald and co-sponsored by Representative Al White. Gov. Bill Ritter signed the Bill into law at the Capitol on March 30, surrounded by leaders of the conservation

community and local governments.

"I'm pleased to be able to provide the opportunity for Counties to work locally to preserve their natural resources and invest in their quality of life," Gov. Ritter said.

SB-98 allows counties to invite voters to approve up to a half-cent sales and use tax to fund open space programs that preserve and maintain their natural areas, water quality, wildlife habitat, open spaces and working farms and ranches. This legislation will be a critical new resource for financially constrained county governments who recognize the need to create effective conservation programs. [Click here](#) for more information.

Senators Romer and Penry Propose to Securitize Lottery

Senators Chris Romer and Josh Penry are proposing to sell the Colorado Lottery to a private party and distribute the up-front payment to stakeholders who currently benefit from Lottery revenue as well as others including schools and veterans' services. This is of huge interest to the conservation community because of the potential impact on Great Outdoors Colorado and other partners. If done in an appropriate way, there is the potential for hundreds of millions of additional dollars for open space acquisition in the next five years. However, the devil is in the details. We are watching this proposal closely and will send updates as we learn more.

Federal Policy News

Bills to Extend Federal Tax Incentive Supported by Senator Salazar and Representative Udall

Efforts to extend the newly-expanded federal tax incentive for conservation easement donations are continuing in both the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives. Senators Max Baucus (D-MT) and Charles Grassley (R-IA) have introduced [Senate Bill 469](#) to make the tax incentive permanent and Representatives Mike Thompson (D-CA) and Dave Camp (R-MI) have introduced a parallel bill, [House Bill 1576](#).

So far, Senator Ken Salazar has signed on to co-sponsor SB 469 and Representative Mark Udall has signed on to co-sponsor HR 1576. The conservation community would like to express our sincere thanks to Senator Salazar and Representative Udall for their support of these important bills.

You can help! Encourage your federal legislators to co-sponsor these bills! Tell them how important conservation is to you and your community and what an important resource this federal tax incentive is. If these expanded tax incentives are made permanent, family farmers, ranchers, and other moderate-income landowners will be able to conserve the land they love while obtaining a significant tax benefit for making the charitable donation of a conservation easement. [Click here](#) for more information.

Farm Bill Discussions Continue

As Congress prepares to update the Farm Bill, CCLT members continue to push support for reauthorization and improvements to programs including the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP), the Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP), the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). These programs provide crucial funding and technical assistance to protect agricultural lands, grasslands, wetlands, and wildlife habitat. Learn more about these programs and suggestions for changes on www.lta.org/publicpolicy/farm_policy, www.ducks.org/farmbill, and by contacting the Partnership of Rangeland Trusts at 307-772-8751.

IRS Audits of

Conservation Easements

Senator Allard and Senator Salazar Continue Work on IRS Conservation Easement Audits

In his opening statement at a March 28 Senate Appropriations Financial Services Subcommittee hearing, panel ranking minority member Wayne Allard expressed concern about "increasingly hostile IRS actions towards conservation easements," saying that "[i]t would appear that the IRS is attempting to dramatically narrow the number of legitimate conservation easements by applying a standard that has been struck down by federal courts two different times. . . There is a significant need for conservation easements in Colorado, and a few abuses should not end the charitable tax credit for everyone." [Click here](#) for the full testimony.

Recently, Senator Salazar along with members of his staff, Senator Allard's staff, Congressman John Salazar's staff, Colorado State Representative Bernie Buescher, and Colorado State Representative Steve King met with several landowners who have easements under audit in Grand Junction to discuss their audits and experiences so far.



We would like to thank the Senators and their staff as well as Congressman Salazar, Representative Buescher and Representative King for their work on this critical issue. While there is no doubt that tax abuses must be identified and stopped, the Senators' efforts to ensure that Colorado taxpayers are treated fairly will be extremely important as this audit process continues. For additional background on the IRS conservation easement audits, [click here](#).

News Around Colorado



LightHawk Offers Donated Flights for Conservation Groups

Did you know that a not-for-profit called LightHawk pairs conservation and environmental organizations with experienced volunteer pilots in the southern Rocky Mountain region and beyond? LightHawk has been offering flights to support environmental efforts since 1979. The volunteer pilots that fly for LightHawk complete more than 800 flight missions each year throughout North and Central America, supporting over 130 environmental partner organizations each year. The diverse types of missions that volunteer pilots undertake include conservation easement monitoring flights; guided educational flights for community leaders and decision-makers; media flights for reporters; technical flights to support habitat and species surveys; and surveillance flights that document environmental crimes and land use conditions. If your flight request is approved, LightHawk's flight services are free of charge. Aircraft, fuel and, of course, time and expertise are all donated by their dedicated volunteer pilots. Of course, donations to LightHawk are always welcome and appreciated!

LightHawk operates under strict guidelines that require it to conduct only legitimate conservation and education missions. LightHawk flights should begin and end in the same location. There are occasional exceptions to this, which can be discussed with LightHawk staff. For more information, go to www.lighthawk.org or contact Sama Blackwell, Western Program Manager, at 303-433-4166 or sblackwell@lighthawk.org.

Land Trust Accreditation Pilot Program in Full Swing - Colorado Land Trusts Participating

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission has started the first round of its 2007 Pilot Program with 22 land trusts including the Eagle Valley Land Trust and the Wilderness Land Trust from Colorado. The Pilot Program is designed to formally test the accreditation process by learning how much time it takes applicants to apply for accreditation; learning how much

time it takes the Commission to review applications; clarifying and documenting decision-making criteria to ensure consistency; and finalizing all the steps in the accreditation application and review process. For more information about the Pilot Program, [click here](#).

Upcoming Events

Great Outdoors Colorado Bonding Committee Meeting

April 24, 9:30 am

GOCO Office

1600 Broadway, Suite 1650

Discussion will cover:

Should GOCO offer a large-scale/Legacy funding round in FY 2007-2008?

If so, do the concepts received indicate there is a need for GOCO to bond or can funding be provided through GOCO's normal cash flow.

Tax-Based Hot Topics in Real Estate

The New Range Wars: The Federal Challenge of Conservation Easements

Like-Kind Exchanges: Reviewing 1031 Structures; Related Party Rules

April 26, 8:30 am - 12:15 pm

CBA-CLE Classroom

1900 Grant St., #300

Denver, Colorado

For more information, [click here](#)

Deadline for Submitting Sessions for 2007 COSA Conference in Steamboat Springs

April 30

[Click here](#) for more information or contact Thea Rock at

trock@jeffco.us.

Ute Mountain Mesa Verde Birding Festival

May 10-13

Montezuma County

For more information, [click here](#)

Workshops for COMaP Users

May 18, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Colorado State University Campus

Fort Collins, Colorado

May 25, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Mesa State Bishop Campus

Grand Junction, Colorado

For more information, [click here](#)

Legacy Land Trust Summer Picnic Celebration and Auction

July 28

Grant Family Organic Farm

Larimer County, Colorado

For more information, [click here](#)

Montezuma Land Conservancy Harvest Beer Festival

September 8

For more information, contact the Montezuma Land Conservancy at 970-565-1664

2007 COSA Conference

September 10-12

Steamboat Springs

For more information, [click here](#).

Rally 2007: The National Land Conservation Conference

New Frontiers of Conservation

October 3-6

Adams Mark Hotel

Denver, Colorado

For more information, [click here](#)

Colorado Outdoor Training Initiative Training Programs

See Training Calendar for Dates
Form more information, [click here](#)

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