



Conservation Easement Program Background

Conservation Easements

Conservation easements are the primary land preservation tool in Colorado, accounting for more than two-thirds of all conserved land in the state. They have been used to protect over a million acres of private land across Colorado from development just in the last decade.

Conservation easements are sold or donated by private landowners to nonprofit or governmental entities to guarantee that a parcel of land will never be developed. Property owners may continue using their land as they have been but give up specific rights, such as the right to develop or subdivide.

There are hundreds of conservation easements around Colorado that have protected farms and ranchland, scenic and historic areas, wildlife habitat and unique natural areas that otherwise could have been lost forever to development.

The financial incentives for landowners offer only a fraction of what they would get for the outright sale of their property. As a result, conservation easements provide a cost-effective way for the state to protect land from development and protect Colorado's agricultural traditions.

Many families with conservation easements have farmed or ranched their property for generations and use the easements to continue their family tradition.



*Irby Ranch
Conservation Easement*

Courtesy John Fielder

Accountability and Transparency

The Colorado land conservation community has been at the forefront of identifying ways to strengthen accountability and transparency in the easement program.

The drafting of **HB 1353** was guided by the Colorado Conservation Easement Tax Credit Task Force, led by Representative Alice Madden and Senator Jim Isgar. The task force, which met in late 2007, included legislators, landowners, state and local officials, and land trusts. The task force worked to supplement reforms enacted last year in HB07-1361, which increased the standards, transparency and accountability for conservation easements. HB 1353 will provide another layer of assurances that landowners and land trusts or other holders of conservation easements are appropriately protecting property and accurately assessing the value of conservation.

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