UTAH OPEN LANDS

PROTECTING THE LANDS YOU LOVE

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

**IT SEEMS LIKE ONLY YESTERDAY** that Utah Open Lands was operating out of the basement of a donated office space at 1910 Prospector Avenue in Park City. Equally present is every down-to-the-wire campaign, every conservation minded landowner and every treasured landscape. For three decades this organization has worked to protect open space through conservation easements, defend as stewards the lands that have no voice, and deepen the balance of places preserved.

There is one common denominator through it all - YOU. Whether you have engaged with this organization since its inception, or have become a member in the last month; whether you have given to a singular campaign, or supported every campaign; whether you have come to Portraits of Preservation, or supported requests for general funding, YOU are the reason we have been able to PROTECT THE LANDS WE all LOVE.

As donors, you are our North Star. You remain constant, guiding this work forward so we can tackle every challenge. Utah Open Lands landowners are those rare pearls that provide the currency of conservation through the compassionate consideration of community. We all join together in the promise for the next generations: the land itself.

Throughout the years our board members have been our bedrock, volunteering countless hours of expertise unwavering in their commitment to this work in a way that is palpable, distinctive, and cutting edge. The staff, the sustaining heartbeat, believes in the tangible strides made daily creating a meaningful legacy that is as relevant today as it will be in the decades to come.

From March of 2020 to March of 2021, we saw how 30 years of Utah Open Lands' land conservation achievements affected every corner of Utah. We witnessed these open spaces becoming the solace, the reflection, and the moments of normalcy in which we found comfort in knowing that we will get through the tough times. So, celebrate with us the renewal of spring, reflecting on a year like no other, ever grateful for 30 years of conservation, of commitment to the land, to each other, to tomorrow. Celebrate with us today the difference you have made, because it is awe-inspiring.

Wendy Fisher, Executive Director

## THE TICKER TAPE IS LONG …

This past year we found ourselves reflecting on our 30 years of operation. Beyond the 100 separate conservation easements, representing over 64,000 acres of protected land we also reflect on how we….

# CHAMPIONED

**…Watershed Protection** through the use of conservation easements - *John D Anderson Memorial Wildlife Preserve, 1994; Willow Heights, 2001; Emigration Canyon, 1998-2016; Richard Clark Memorial Watershed, Wildlife and Nature Preserve, 1999.*

**…Successful, Nearly Impossible, Land Protection Campaigns**:

- *Bonanza Flat* -$13 million in 6 months
- *Toll Canyon* $250,000 in five weeks
- *Cottonwood Heights Bonneville Shoreline Trail* $3 million in 10 months
- *Peaceful Valley Ranch* $810,000 in 6 months
- *Castleton Tower* $640,000 in 3 years
- *Kohler Dairy* $7 million in 12 months
- *Armstrong Snow Ranch Pastures* $6 million in 12 months
- *Owl Meadow* $770,000 in 90 days
- *Perkins Flat Preserve* $1.4 million in six months
- *Killyon Canyon* $1.8 million in 120 days

**…Local Land Efforts** - Met with boards and volunteers interested in establishing land trusts, created branches of UOL which eventually became their own land trust and facilitated two non-profit grants to land conservation organizations.

**…Conservation Legislation** - serving on multiple trails and open space task forces, and crafting legislation - LeRay McAllister Fund 1999, Conservation Easement Rollback Relief 1994, and Agricultural Land Task Force.

# DEFENDED

**...Conservation Easements Against Development Interest Attacks** - *Bridal Veil Falls Preserve, Galena Soo'nkhani Preserve*

**...Conservation Easements Against Ill-conceived Agency Projects** - *Galena Soo'nkhani Preserve, Hi-Ute Ranch Reserve, Green Ravine Conservation Area, Cottonwood Heights Bonneville Shoreline Trail Preserve, Gene and Deane Wheadon Farmland Preserve*

**...Against Conservation Easement Violations** - *University of Utah Heritage Preserve, Hidden Hollow Natural Area Preserve, Galena Soo'nkhani Preserve, Willow Creek Open Space, Gene and Deane Wheadon FarmlandPreserve, Hi Ute Ranch Reserve, Grandeur Peak Natural Area, Swaner Preserve: Ranch Place*

*"The synergistic webs of relationships interwoven and found throughout nature illustrate connections that can be made, including those between one another."*

- Marie Schleicher
Utah Open Lands,
Lands Program Director

2020 was the second year of our Trying Times seminar in partnership with University of Utah, educating on easement drafting the latest federal cases, tax law and appraisals with support from the Cultural Vision Fund.

CULTURAL VISION FUND
HUMANITIES • ARTS • ENVIRONMENT

# STRENGTHENED

**...Conservation Easement Education** - Through our Gaining Ground Series, we brought in National Experts to educate on:

- Conservation Easement Drafting and Tax Incentives with Steve Small - Mid-1990s
- Conservation Easement Appraisal Techniques with Richard Roddewig - Early 2000s
- Conservation Easement Stewardship and Management at the Wallace Stegner Center - 2018
- Conservation Easement Federal Court Case with Trying Times Seminar - 2019, 2020 and upcoming May 20, 2021

**...Community Conservation Organizations** throughout Utah - Summit, Salt Lake, Weber, Washington, Wasatch, Utah, Rich, Cache, Grand, Tooele, Garfield and Wayne Counties

# 2020 BY THE NUMBERS

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CAMPAIGNS

NEW CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

BUILT COALITIONS WITH

NUMBER OF CONSERVATION AMBASSADORS

NEW NATIVE PLANT PROPOGATIONS

ACRES SAVED

MILES OF NEW TRAILS

NUMBER OF VIRTUAL EVENTS

DOLLARS RAISED

DOLLARS LEVERAGED

*"With external expectations and pressures lifted, these places provide opportunities to retreat and restore, unburdened by the stresses of everyday life; nature creates chances to summit peaks, experience wildlife, realize your potential and test your metal. It is natures harmony that provides us an unbiased space for new beginnings."*

-Katherine Maus
Utah Open Lands, Public Engagement Director

# A YEAR OF LEANING IN

**The Utah Legislature appropriated only $1 million to the Le Ray McAllister Fund in 2021, in comparison to $3.4 million in 2019. Your voice makes a difference in protecting the lands we love for this generation and the next.**

© Zach Young

In 2020, both mountain and road bike sales increased by 144%. Visitation to State Parks, trailheads and open spaces throughout the State of Utah were up 300% from the previous year according to the Governor's Office of Economic Development. These numbers are staggering.

The data undeniably demonstrate the value of the places we play, and are undoubtedly a harbinger of the need to protect more of these places. If you've recreated in the last year, then you understand what it's like to experience crowded trailheads, parking shortages and user conflicts.

Though part of the solution is creating more trails, and saving more open space, there are other options. One critical action is using our voices to create the change that is needed for these natural areas. Encouraging the funding of the LeRay McAllister Critical Lands Fund, or supporting local bond initiatives, are crucial tools which enable big changes that result in even bigger overall impacts.

When it comes to actions, Utah Open Lands promotes sustainable use of our open spaces so they are not loved to death. From enforcing watershed protections at Bloods Lake to creating more access, like our Cottonwood Heights Bonneville Shoreline Trail acquisition, Utah Open Lands is doing our part to manage and sustain open space in a manner that guards these places from being overused and abused. Current and future trails, whether used for hiking, biking or dog-walking, face challenges; the solution depends on one simple component - **YOU**.

Join Utah Open Lands in a commitment to be responsible stewards of our beloved open spaces, and allow for our recreational experience and opportunity to be elevated.

*Visit our website for more tips on how to be an exceptional steward!*

**LOCATION: Provo Canyon, Utah County**
**ACREAGE: 21 acres**
**COMPLETED: January 6, 2021**

Before being considered for State Monument designation, Bridal Veil Falls was in danger of being sold for development. As 2020 was coming to a close, Utah Open Lands responded to a call from the Utah County Commission to help them with a conservation solution for Bridal Veil Falls. In a matter of months Utah Open Lands worked in partnership with the County to ensure a conservation easement was recorded to forever protect this renown natural wonder. The effort garnered a groundswell of support including over 700 individuals attending, virtually or in person, a Utah County Commission meeting endorsing the protection of the Falls through a conservation easement. As a magnet for hikers, sight-seers, and climbers, the potential sale of this land to a developer sparked a groundswell of concern from community members who's voices spoke in unison on behalf of saving this extraordinary property.

The work of the Utah County Commissioners and Utah Open Lands to draft and complete a conservation easement and baseline documentation in less than 60 days was a heroic effort applauded by the community. This effort set the stage for further consideration by the Utah Legislature for possible State Monument designation.

# BRIDAL VEIL FALLS

**Utah Open Lands is currently involved in the ongoing discussion of the management of Bridal Veil Falls and the potential designation as a State Monument or State Park.**

# REDFORD FAMILY

# ELK MEADOWS PRESERVE

***"This is my gift to my community, my self, and most of all my children, to pass on to their children, so they can experience the land as something real rather than as something seen in movies, described in history books or only imagined".***

***- ROBERT REDFORD,*** 1998 North Fork Preservation Alliance (Canyon Keeper) Newsletter

# REDFORD FAMILY ELK MEADOWS PRESERVE

As Robert Redford announced his decision to sell Sundance Mountain Resort in 2020, part of the agreement included the gift of 311 acres, now known as The Redford Family Elk Meadows Preserve through a conservation easement grant to Utah Open Lands. Though Redford's 50-year stewardship of those resort lands has changed hands, the legacy of his stewardship in the canyon remains strong.

For Utah Open Lands, this partnership with the Redford Family spans more than two decades. On October 4, 1998, Robert Redford, surrounded by family, friends, poets and Utah Open Lands board members, dedicated over 860 acres of land for conservation, just north and west of Elk Meadows. The Redford Family Nature and Wildlife Preserve was their first act of preservation, but as the recent Redford Family Elk Meadows Preserve demonstrates, it is hardly the last.

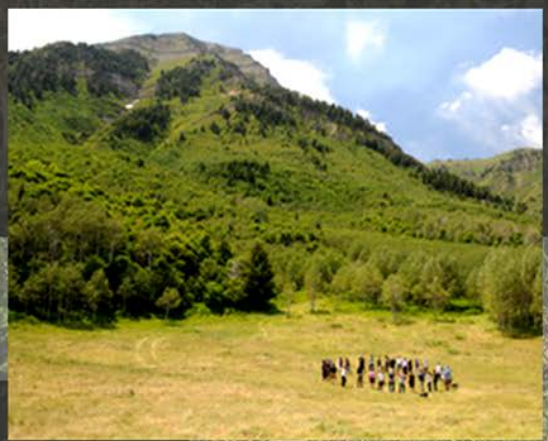
A fitting description of the Elk Meadows landscape came from the late James Redford who wrote just after the announcement of its protection. "Elk Meadows is a priceless pedestal on which rests one of Utah's most powerful Peaks: Mt. Timpanogos. To walk those meadows in summer or snowshoe and cross-country ski there in the winter is to enter a sanctuary."

For the public, this experience of majesty and sanctuary could have ended if not for the Redford Family's intent to protect it. The majority of the famed Stewart Falls trail makes its way from Aspen Grove through the newly created conservation easement eventually depositing well worn-out hikers at the base of the cascading waterfall whose namesake comes from the pioneering Stewart Family who sold the Timp Haven Ski Resort to Robert Redford in the late 1960s.

The Ute Tribe were the first people of the canyon and consider these lands sacred. The lands surrounding Sundance provided rich hunting grounds for Ute bands living beside Utah Lake and throughout the Provo River drainage. Though there is little evidence of time spent in the Sundance area, early records show a strong connection. Ceremonies, like the Bear Dance, and the Sun Dance, an elaborate ceremony lasting four days and four nights when the dancers neither eat nor drink during this time undoubtedly played out under the stalwart Timpanogos cirques.

At the time of the Redford Family's first gift of a conservation easement in 1998, Utah Open Lands was barely eight years old. This gift marked an important milestone and inspired the organization with the realm of possibilities of how significant conservation easements could become in the bedrock of conservation for the state of Utah.

Twenty-two years later, the gift of the Redford Family Elk Meadows Preserve solidifies how inspired acts of preservation provide hope and progress toward the collective conservation that is needed for our planet.



*A Blessing Ceremony*
*Photo Courtesy: Fred Hayes*

The village that came together to save the land at the base of Little Cottonwood Canyon was remarkable in several ways. It was just as much the sheer number of individual supporters as it was the rallying together of nonprofit organizations that appealed to their own members. It was just as much the commitment of the cities and counties as it was the patience and contributions of the landowners. At the commencement of the fundraising campaign, there was already a full development agreement in place and access and water service agreements made with various agencies. Without the willingness of the landowners to see this land preserved, the protection of this landscape would not have been possible. The Despain, Olsen, Kessler and Eastham landowners didn't just agree to participate in a conservation solution; they didn't just work to keep development offers at bay; they made a contribution of over $1 million in land value to ensure the protection of this landscape and saw the campaign through to a successful end. They were a part of ensuring that the land will remain as a cherished piece of open space for this generation and the next.

Through our $3 million campaign, soaring granite peaks and a cornerstone of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail are now safe forever. Each peak, each footprint in the soil, tells a story that now has a happy ending, written by a community who stepped in, stood up, and who can now breathe a heavy sigh of relief.

Contributors: AHE/CI Trust, Central Wasatch Commission, Cottonwood Heights, Draper City, Friends of Alta, Intermountain Health Care, LeRay McAllister Fund, Miller Paving, Salt Lake County, Salt Lake City Public Utilities, Sandy City, Wasatch Mountain Club, Zion's Bank, an Anonymous Foundation and 489 other individual donors.

**LOCATION: Base of Little Cottonwood Canyon, Cottonwood Heights**
**ACREAGE: 26 acres**
**COMPLETED: November 17, 2020**

# FINANCIALS

Tangible land protection has always been at the core of Utah Open Lands, even when keeping the lights on was the biggest financial hurdle the fledgling organization faced. Our current annual operating budget underscores the fact that the millions of dollars this organization raises, on an annual basis, goes fundamentally to protecting land.

Our beginnings in a basement have now become a permanent home in a turn-of-the-century bungalow in the heart of Salt Lake. A staff of one has now become five dedicated employees who wear multiple hats to maximize the impact of Utah Open Lands' intrinsically powerful work.

As a testament to our lean infrastructure, our most recent year's Charitable Solicitation Permit cites that **97% OF THE FUNDING RECEIVED GOES TOWARD OUR PROGRAMS: LAND PROTECTION**

*"The monumental campaigns which bring our community together are only the beginning of the perpetual conservation success. What often goes unseen is how we fulfill our promise to the community through reliable stewardship and forever defense of the lands we protect."*

- Seychelle Marcus
Utah Open Lands Stewardship Coordinator

Looking at the numbers, you, our members, have made this work possible. Through donations to our general fund, through support of our preservation campaigns, and through your commitment to the cause, we have been able to Protect the Lands We all Love.

Beyond your financial support, when you donate, you become a member, you become a part of a large circle of world citizens who, under this land saving mission, sustain our quality of life through the vital protection of open landscapes. You become a part of the solution, through the open space that impacts visitors, attracts businesses and keeps our local economies resilient. You participate in preservation that elevates our healthy options and sets the stage for the legacy that we will leave for our children's children.

# STEWARDSHIP AND PRICELESS CONSERVATION

From our first preservation projects in Park City and Wasatch County totaling 868 acres, to our 2021 campaigns focused on over 10,000 additional acres, Utah Open Lands' preservation reach encompasses the entire State. Stewardship is especially essential as defense can be costly. From the commitment of our first Stewardship contribution totaling $500 to the establishment of a permanent stewardship fund, Utah Open Lands' goal for 2021 is to bring our Stewardship Endowment to within reach of $1,000,000. From regular monitoring, to taking legal action, to scientific tracking of conservation values, we continuously witness the strength of the Stewardship Fund - even when coming up against extraordinary threats.

# BECOMING A MEMBER

**OUR LAND CAMPAIGNS HAVE RAISED OVER $85 MILLION DOLLARS OVER 30 YEARS BY LEVERAGING FUNDS FROM PRIVATE, STATE, FEDERAL AND LOCAL SOURCES, EVEN FURTHER LEVERAGED BY EACH AND EVERY ONE OF OUR MEMBERS.**

Visit our website at **UTAHOPENLANDS.ORG** to join the thousands of others who have made a commitment to saving our open spaces and critical landscapes, for this generation and generations to come.

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## STAFF

Wendy Fisher, Executive Director
Catherine Cargill, Operations
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Kat Maus, Public Engagement
Seychelle Marcus, Stewardship

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## UTAH OPEN LANDS MISSION

Utah Open Lands is a 501c(3) non-profit land trust conservation association. Our mission is to preserve and protect open space in order to maintain Utah's natural heritage and quality of life for present and future generations. This is achieved by assisting private landowners, government agencies and communities in the voluntary preservation of the agricultural, scenic, recreational, historic and wildlife values of open land.

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