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MISSION

Our mission is to preserve, steward 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.

Utah Open Lands is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization: our FEIN is 87-0480542

Photo courtesy: Jim Schuler



ANNUAL REPORT

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UTAH OPEN LANDS

PROTECTING THE LANDS YOU LOVE



Spring 2023 - From the desk of Wendy Fisher, Executive Director

What is unique about acts of land conservation is that they require us to look to the land first. It is fundamentally an act of generosity, of sharing, of passing something on to the next generation so that others might be enriched by a relationship with the land, unfiltered and unaltered in its natural state. This landscape perspective is one that "sees the forest for the trees."

When Utah Open Lands engages in a campaign to save a landscape or works through the complexities of a conservation easement with a landowner who shares this ethos of land protection, the organization is making a promise to the land, the community, and to the elk and hawks and cougar and deer. Ours is a promise that what is present today will remain forever untouched by development.

This promise is central to Utah Open Lands' mission **to preserve, protect and steward open space in order to maintain Utah's natural heritage and quality of life for present and future generations.**

As 2022 drew to a close, Utah Open Lands had protected over 760 acres and secured funding to finalize the protection of another 550 acres of land for early 2023. By the end of 2023, we are on track to preserve another 4,000 acres.

Utah Open Lands Stewardship forces monitored 102 separate conservation easements covering over 64,000 acres to ensure enforcement of the terms of the conservation easement. Utah Open Lands defense of our promise of forever required violators to restore disturbed areas recouping damages, setting a precedent that surpasses national standards. Utah Open Lands worked with city and county partners on a large preserved area with restoration and invasive species mitigation to improve habitat and decrease wildfire danger through guiding better management practices and sustaining healthy ecosystems.

From our new partnership with the Front Climbing Gym as an Impact Coalition Partner to our Transit to Trails program with Park City to reduce trailhead congestion and carbon emissions, Utah Open Lands created moments throughout the year for recreational users to recognize how their choices impact our land, water and air. Our winter Transit to Trails program to Bonanza Flat was so successful that it received a generous grant from a donor to support the early winter season for 2023/2024.

Our achievements are detailed in this Annual Report; we hope you, as a donor to this organization, are as proud as we are.

RUNNING THE NUMBERS



PROTECT AND DEFEND

Every Utahn knows what hangs in the balance of land conservation: the lands we call home that define where our hearts reside.

Like a champion league bout where the most powerful contenders square off, the conservation moments that define our wins come from our courage and the broader collective of our voices working together like a winning team. Our members rely on our conservation leadership to protect the lands we all love.

Utah Open Lands' successful protection of Bridal Veil Falls distilled the truth that even an iconic landscape thought to be untouchable by private development are at risk without the permanent protection of a conservation


easement.

Celebrating the protection of Elk Meadows with the Redford Family brought into focus the stewardship promise we make to every precious landscape. Utah Open Lands stands ready to defend a treasured land forever. We ready ourselves for this stewardship by diligent monitoring by tracking and by investing in educating those who love the land to help us watch over these treasured lands. We immerse ourselves in the nooks and crannies of a functioning landscape just as a diligent doctor scrutinizes a patient, so we can spot when something is out of place and might threaten the conservation values of these lands under our trust.

Protected lands remain in the line of fire, eyed by road plans and utility corridors as much as they are eyed by sprawling development, which is why our stewardship role is so important.

When stewardship requires protective action, we ready ourselves with courage and step forward to actively defend the places that depend on us. The time and diligence needed to preempt and respond to threats to our protected lands is a sizable part of our annual budget; from ill-conceived transportation plans, to emboldened developers set to break our resolve. Just this year alone, Utah Open Lands responded to issues ranging from poaching wildlife on one of our wildlife preserves a violation that bulldozed a mature forested ecosystem on a protected conservation area where we halted actions to prevent further damage to the mosaic of colors and ecological function.

The restoration plans we have put in place hold violators accountable, ensure that we give a voice to the land, and go the extra distance to replace what was lost. These fights are not easy to win, and they require courage and commitment, but we are honored to wage them on behalf of the lands we love and call home.



*Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul, and sings the tune
without the words, and never stops at all.*

~ from *Hope is the thing with feathers* by Emily Dickenson.

KEM C. GARDNER MIDWAY LEGACY PRESERVE

Together with Kem Gardner and the Town of Midway, Utah Open Lands celebrated Kem's donation of 42 acres of land along the entry corridor to Midway City. This donation included the grant of a conservation easement to Utah Open Lands.

The land includes critical habitat for osprey, bald eagles, sandhill cranes and numerous songbirds. It safeguards scenic views along one of the three entry points to Midway and will allow for a trailhead adjacent to the Historic Heber Valley Railroad rail line. It was fitting during the Celebration at Midways' Founders Day on

June 4th to quote one of Mr. Gardner's favorite poets Emily Dickenson. Mr. Gardner's donation which represents over millions of dollars in value is a legacy that Utah Open Lands was thrilled to work with the Gardner family to achieve.

Mr. Gardner's contribution of land on the edge of an active development corridor, juxtaposed the way in which open space is a final frontier of sorts, and its protection, as opposed to development, ensures that the intrinsic values that set the Midway community apart from Anytown, USA, will be protected forever as open space.

BISHOP FAMILY MENDON PRESERVE

Bruce and Sally Bishop's vision for a better world has just been translated into a tangible and priceless gift to the residents of Mendon, Cache County, Utah, and the United States. By placing their bucolic farm under a permanent conservation easement, they have ensured that 40 acres of land will forever remain open and undeveloped. Their deep value of community and education is reflected in both their life work and in their generosity. The voluntary gift of this easement is a firm testament to their conservation ethos. "It has been our dream to leave this legacy and because of the good work of UOL that our contribution was possible."

In 2022 Cache County voters passed a \$20 million open space bond to save dwindling open land reserves. Utah Open Lands protected some of the first open lands in Cache County, which were subsequently donated as part of the American West Heritage Center and their non-mechanized working landscapes.

It was with tremendous gratitude that Utah Open Lands worked to see the protection of the Bishop Family Mendon Preserve; a complete donation through a conservation easement granted to Utah

Open Lands. This landscape exemplifies the type of land that Cache County residents were hoping to see protected in passing their open space bond.

The Bishop Family Scenic Preserve welcomes hikers in the approach to rare access into the roughly 23,000 acres of the U.S. Forest Service's Wellsville Mountain Wilderness. Visitors may now permanently gaze onto classic pastoral views with a lush riparian zone situated between the craggy pinnacles of the Wellsville Mountains and Bear River Mountain Ranges.



MONARCH HAVEN PRESERVE

Along the Jordan River, protection of pollinator habitat got a huge boost through a donation of a conservation easement made by Doug Hasbrouck and Faye Anderson. Almost 20 acres of Certified Monarch Butterfly habitat has now been protected expanding upon 430 acres of protected land immediately adjacent. Eventually ending up in the Great Salt Lake, this land preservation project also resulted in the protection of water rights associated with the property, which must now remain a part of the land and the stream that is a tributary to the Jordan River that feeds the Great Salt Lake.

Monarch Haven's prestigious Monarch Butterfly certification includes its Monarch Butterfly waystation from Monarch Watch as well as certification from the National Wildlife Federation. Monarch butterflies are a candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act and are a Utah recognized Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Supported by abundant milkweed and nectar flora found on the Property. Monarch Haven will make a difference for this species.

Sitting in close proximity to the

Jordan River, the Property provides expansive views and can be seen from many surrounding public vantage points such as the Jordan River Parkway Trail, Bangerter Highway, the Salt Lake County's Riverbend Public Golf Course, and Utah Open Lands' and DFFSL's conservation easement in the Galena Soo'hkahni Preserve. Three acres of the land are categorized as Farmland of Statewide Significance and the Property preserves part of an agricultural landscape similar to that found in the Riverton area before the rapid housing development of recent years.



KILLYON CANYON RED ROCKS PRESERVE

Talking with the landowner and an Emigration Canyon Resident, the vision to preserve the Killyon Creek basin from development began 30 years ago with a fledgling Utah Open Lands. The concern was for water conservation and water quality. The protection of the Killyon Redrock Preserve along with the Allred Family land was the final 126 acres needed to ensure complete protection of this watershed basin that drains into Emigration Creek along its way to the Jordan River and the Great Salt Lake.

Natural waterfalls and springs are safeguarded under the conservation easement granted to Utah Open Lands and the purchases made by Salt Lake City Public Lands and Utah Open Lands along with a donation of \$600,000 in land value from the landowner. This land will provide one public trail connection, but will remain largely

protected for the ecological and watershed values along with its unique geologic formations.

Funding to make this last piece of the protection of Killyon Canyon complete came from Swire Coca-Cola and the David Kelby Johnson Foundation. Land conservation of this scale simply could not



Redford Family Elk Meadows Celebration

● ADMINISTRATION
● FUNDRAISING
● PROGRAM

CONSERVATION ACQUISITION ●

- Kem C. Gardner Legacy Preserve Area
- Killyon Canyon Red Rocks

- Bishop Family Scenic Preserve
- Monarch Haven
- Peterson Family Pastures & Wildlife Preserve

STEWARDSHIP (see inset below) ●

CONSERVATION EDUCATION ●

- Trying Times National Symposium
- Castleton Tower
- Landscape Landing Pages
- Leave it Loved Campaign



Traditional Ute Blessing Ceremony



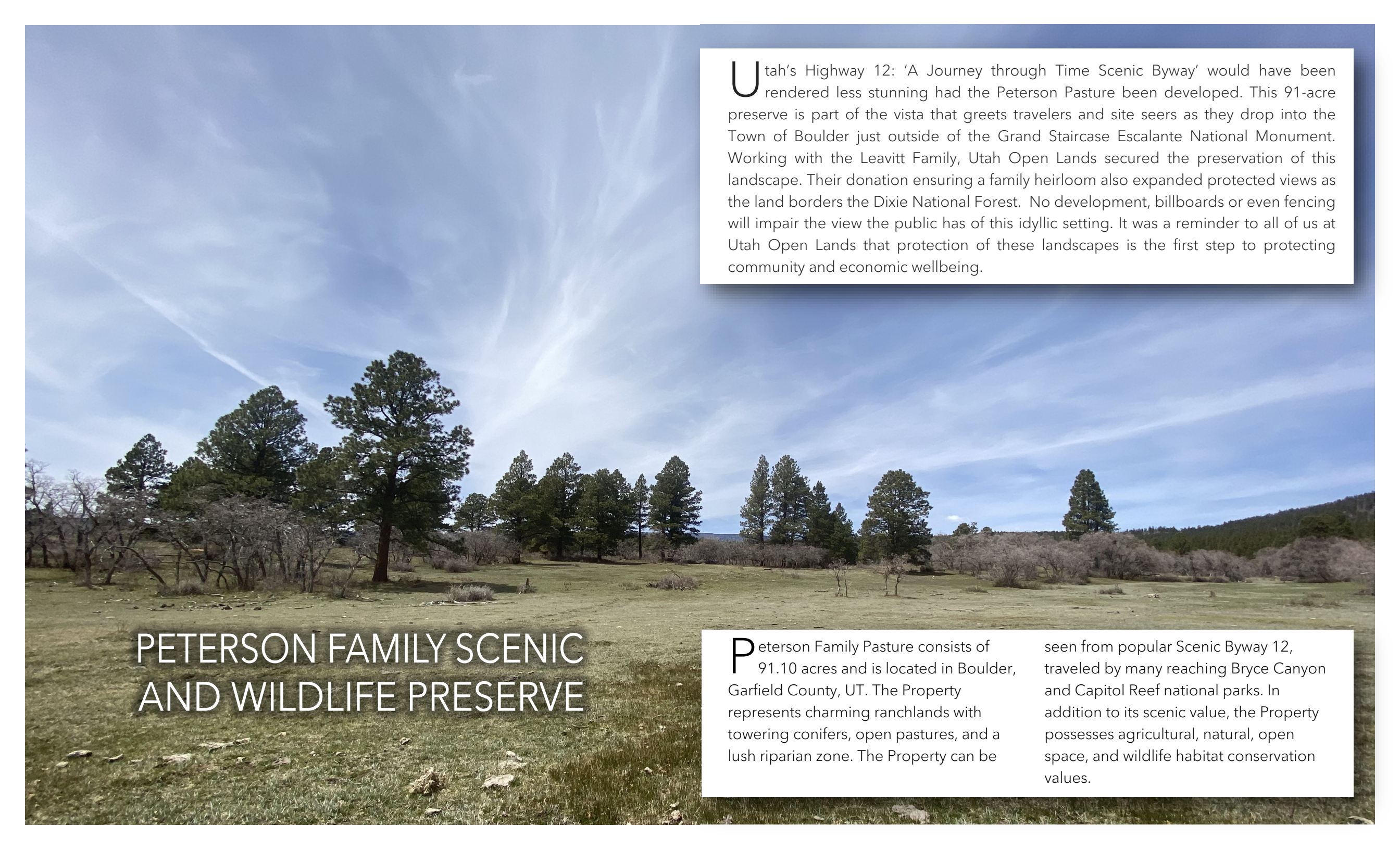
Kem C. Gardner Midway Legacy Preserve

Where Your Dollars Go

Category	Color
Administration	Yellow
Fundraising	Olive Green
Program	Light Green
Conservation Acquisition	Dark Green
Stewardship	Blue

Stewardship Program

Category	Color
Violation Enforcement	Light Blue
Annual Monitoring	Dark Blue
Wheadon Restoration	Medium Blue
Bonanza Flat Restoration	Dark Teal



Utah's Highway 12: 'A Journey through Time Scenic Byway' would have been rendered less stunning had the Peterson Pasture been developed. This 91-acre preserve is part of the vista that greets travelers and site seers as they drop into the Town of Boulder just outside of the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument. Working with the Leavitt Family, Utah Open Lands secured the preservation of this landscape. Their donation ensuring a family heirloom also expanded protected views as the land borders the Dixie National Forest. No development, billboards or even fencing will impair the view the public has of this idyllic setting. It was a reminder to all of us at Utah Open Lands that protection of these landscapes is the first step to protecting community and economic wellbeing.

PETERSON FAMILY SCENIC AND WILDLIFE PRESERVE

Peterson Family Pasture consists of 91.10 acres and is located in Boulder, Garfield County, UT. The Property represents charming ranchlands with towering conifers, open pastures, and a lush riparian zone. The Property can be

seen from popular Scenic Byway 12, traveled by many reaching Bryce Canyon and Capitol Reef national parks. In addition to its scenic value, the Property possesses agricultural, natural, open space, and wildlife habitat conservation values.

CLIMATE RESILIENCY



Future climate resilience lies in the places we play, the places that inspire us with breathtaking beauty, the refuges for species great and small. Like a heat-sensing map, the cooling blues and gentle greens seen in the satellite imagery of Utah Open Lands' preserves are a refuge from the concrete and asphalt that foretell the priceless value these natural landscapes possess. For eleven endemic avian and fish species at Bear Lake, our protection of the South Eden Shoreline and Canyons Preserve on the shores of the Lake will help protect water quality and complement the riparian ecosystem these species depend on.

While we don't yet know the full impact of climate change, these landscapes hold a positive account

balance of streams and wetlands, forests and rich soils that leverage solutions yet to be appraised. Utah Open Lands' members and supporters know that the funds they donate add to this account balance of reducing our collective footprint.

We leveraged \$100,000 from those who rallied to support our protection of the shores of Bear Lake to match grants from the AHE/CI trust and the Walbridge Fund for another \$100,000. These generous donations in turn leveraged millions of dollars donated by the landowning family and another \$3 million from the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program from the Natural Resource Conservation Service.



CHALLENGE YOUR INNER STEWARD

Amid a dense underbrush, dappled sunlight filters down on tawny colored ground. The smell of a budding aspen forest on protected lands permeates the Spring air. Motionless and silent, sunlight beams onto the forest floor, highlighting the white spots on light brown fur that camouflages a young elk calf. Not far away, huddled with the rest of the herd, the mother cow feeds and intermittently returns to feed the calf.

Calving and fawning areas, unique and rare plant species, forest health, forest succession and the dynamic ecological webs are just some of the aspects Utah Open Lands must consider on the lands we protect. Intermingling and conflicting conservation values are just some of the complex components Utah Open Lands evaluates and monitors to serve the intentions within the conservation easement.

Natural land inventories, baseline documentation reports and adaptive management plans are a foundation for our greater stewardship understanding of a protected landscape which serves as the underpinnings for our *Leave It Loved Campaign*. The educational tenants of our *Campaign* aim to keep the lands we love safe by keeping those of us who love our lands from loving them to death.

The explosion in recreational use on all of Utah's open spaces in just the past 2 years impacts the delicate routine of many species. Spotting wildlife on a hike or ride through a rustling aspen forest is always awe-inspiring, but maintaining our distance, not stopping to take a selfie and instead respecting these animals' by turning around when appropriate, demonstrates the true stewardship we must all embrace. In places where our adventures are allowed to take flight, we must be acutely aware of the footprints we leave.

Striking the balance with our exploration of nature and our quest for outdoor adventure means having portions of nature left alone for nature's sake. Several landscapes under our watch are not open for public recreation, but to safeguard the home of species listed as candidates for endangered species listing, or provide critical winter forage in areas where winter range is disappearing at an alarming rate, or they include the dynamic upland and lowland complexes of a wetland meadow. Some of these landscapes have demonstrated that they are a refuge sought by wildlife.

Leaving it loved includes restoration. Just this fall, Utah Open Lands restored unsustainable rogue trails which have an oversized impact on riparian areas. The unsustainable use of these trails damaged a large area considered to be habitat types of highest priority for conservation by state natural resource agencies. Our Leave It Loved Campaign highlights the ways everyone can engage with the landscape in a more sustainable manner. This campaign has raised over \$150,000 for restoration efforts on: Bonanza Flat Conservation Area, Gene & Deane Wheadon Farmland Preserve, Galena Soo'nkahni Preserve and our Emigration Canyon Preserve. This past year Utah Open Lands had over 125 individuals volunteering their time to plant trees and shrubs, spread seeds, pull invasive species and curb erosion silting valuable alpine lakes. Businesses like Backcountry, Cotopaxi, Kodiak Cakes, Brighton Ski Resort and the Park City Chamber Bureau made restoration work with Utah Open Lands a priority. Collectively, we remediated 6 rogue trails, replaced several acres of invasive vegetation with native vegetation, and aided in the restoration of a section of stream that feeds the Great Salt Lake.

A FOREVER EDUCATION



"Like the intricate ecological systems, family connections, and historical context they are intended to protect, conservation easements are complex. They are tailor made, specific to the land, the landowner and the myriad conservation values that are unique to place, time and circumstance. They do not happen overnight. It is appropriate that preservation intended to last forever takes time to craft. How to distill a landscape into a written document is challenging to say the least. Anticipating the potential future changes to an ecosystem is nearly impossible, but conservation easements protect land and undeniably provide the essential intention for safeguarding landscapes and the conservation values we attribute to them. And intention is not insignificant." ~ Wendy Fisher. "Managing, Accommodating, and Sustaining the Wild." *Reimagining a Place for the Wild*

Sometimes how we define conserved lands and how we value them must be safeguarded to ensure a level playing field for all lands and landowners. In addition to being a precious means of saving treasured lands for future generations, a conservation easement is also a transaction between a conservator and a willing landowner. For that reason, we must make sure that valuations are equitable and fair and not unwittingly devised to benefit one landowner through inflated valuations that undermine the future of the land conservation movement.

Utah Open Lands recognized early-on the need to protect the integrity of conservation work, and we took a leadership role in building the conservation community knowledge of this potential problem nationwide. Utah Open Lands started the first statewide conservation easement seminar *Gaining Ground* in 1994. We brought together legal experts on conservation easements with appraisal experts to educate Utah leaders, and Utah's small land trust community to increase the quality of land conservation in the state.

In 2019, Utah Open Lands took our *Gaining Ground*, later re-named *Trying Times*, seminar to a national audience by focusing on recent tax-court cases of abusive transactions that threatened good land protection and the promise of perpetuity by bad actors. We launched *this symposium* because we know most people want

'forever' to ensure perpetuity. We have been leading the dialogue about protecting lands each year.

The panel of experts includes Professor McLaughlin who also serves on UOL's board and whose tireless devotion to the promise of perpetuity inspired the seminar. Early-on, Utah Open Lands sought out Steve Small who crafted the Treasury Regulations in the '80s. The issues he currently considers when creating state-of-the-art conservation easements inspires accurate and improved documentation. Utah Open Lands' *Trying Times* is one of only a few national seminars that features IRS agents.

Utah Open Lands' leadership through *Trying Times* ensures the promise of forever is kept to the willing landowner and the community that supported this vision when the land was originally protected. From lawyers to appraisers and philanthropists to activists, Utah Open Lands is helping to create a foundation of integrity among all land trusts, agency staff and other professionals to ensure that conservation easements permanently safeguard these threatened landscapes. Empowering these individuals with knowledge on the latest legal decisions and ongoing certification requirements empowers our leaders to improve the quality of their conservation instruments for the betterment of our climate, our fish and wildlife legacy, and to sustain our enduring environment for generations to come.