



## **Green Piece of Paradise**

Have you ever felt discouraged or disconnected from the world? For many, nature is the one thing that can help to reconnect us with the world. Unfortunately, opportunities to connect with nature are getting fewer and fewer.

I'm sure you can think of that one place growing up that was very dear to your heart, maybe you left for a few years, and came back to find that memorable setting turned into a subdivision. Unfortunately, this gloomy outcome happens more times than not in this day and age—especially in Colorado.

It doesn't have to be that way.

One family who's been helping to preserve Colorado's natural treasures so that we can all reconnect is Jim and Deane LaRue. They decided to stand up to the pressures of development, and in 2015 placed a conservation easement on their property.

The result? Protection of the property in perpetuity, meaning the land will be set aside for conservation purposes forever. Not only do the LaRue's get to enjoy this fantastic accomplishment, but so do their children, their grandchildren, and all the wildlife that also call this wonderful landscape home.

You may think that pursuing a conservation easement might be too difficult or too time consuming; maybe you think it's not for you. And you may be right, as conservation easements are not for everyone. But, if you dearly love your land and never, even when you're gone someday, want to see it transformed into a subdivision, you may want to think again.

“Doing a conservation easement benefits everyone if you can just realize that the land is a part of you”  
—Deane LaRue.



If you are inspired to conserve land for future generations you can get started today, the process is easier than you think. Conservation easements begin with two simple steps: 1) Make sure your conservation goals align with the goals of your chosen land trust, and 2) Do the paperwork (it may not sound fun, but this is what makes everything official!).

For example, the LaRue's main conservation goals were to continue ranching the property, keep the water on the land, and to keep the property in one piece. As long as they could do just that, they would be happy. Oddly enough, these goals aligned seamlessly with that of The Trust for Public Land—protect land for people and keep it available for generations to come.

The Trust for Public Land worked with Jim and Deane every step of the way. They worked together to structure a conservation easement that met both party's standards, and filed all required paperwork at the local and state level. Moving forward, Jim and Deane worked with Tax Credit Connection to acquire and sell their tax credits they could not use. "The tax credits generated through the donation helped to partially pay off the property", explained Deane. This allows the LaRue's to focus on what they do best—work the land and protect those natural resources that define Colorado's charming and rugged character.

"The views of our property are incredible—we're basically surrounded by mountains in every direction", explained Deane LaRue. "The Collegiate Peaks tower in the backdrop, with rolling green pastures dominating most of the property". Simply stated, Deane saw this land as too beautiful and productive to see subdivided and sold off to a developer.

And it's a good thing the land was not sold off to a developer. The LaRue's hold the second highest priority water right along the South Arkansas, which allows them to grow and maintain extremely healthy pastures. "It is very important to keep the water on the land; we use mostly flood irrigation techniques, which allows crops to be watered while returning water back down to the water table" explained Deane. No matter your profession, this surely benefits everyone downstream!

As with a lot of ranchers and farmers, Deane's father and grandfather also worked the land while she was growing up. In fact, Deane's father was the first person in Chaffee County to place a conservation easement on their property. "It was a tool he could use to get paid for conservation, and keep the property protected and in once piece," said Deane.

If you're ever traveling along State Highway 50, and find yourself heavenly gazing upon acres and acres of natural landscapes, think of the LaRues and all the great work they just accomplished—after all, they may have just helped you reconnect with the natural world and forget about life's worries for a little while.

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