

Hutchinson family receives 2013 Conservationist Award

Posted: Friday, December 27, 2013 9:11 am

The Land Trust of the Upper Arkansas presented its 2013 Conservationist Award to the Hutchinson family for “outstanding leadership, selfless dedication and commitment to protecting the natural, historical and agricultural resources” at the Land Trust’s annual event and fundraiser Dec. 5.

The fundraiser netted \$8,011, which will be used to support the Land Trust’s mission to protect in perpetuity significant natural, historical and agricultural lands, water resources and wildlife habitats.

The Conservationist Award recognized the Hutchinson family for multigenerational contributions to conservation and the community.

The family first settled in the Upper Arkansas Valley in 1866. Their ranching operation grew to 5,000 head of cattle that ranged from the San Luis Valley to South Park and from Leadville to Westcliffe.

Today Abby Hutchinson, a sixth-generation Hutchinson and Dr. Wendell Hutchinson’s granddaughter, continues the legacy of ranching.

Wendell Hutchinson donated the historic Hutchinson homestead, built in 1872, and its outbuildings to the town of Poncha Springs in 2003. The ranch house, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is a learning center focused on heritage, and ranching and farming practices.

Wendell Hutchinson and his children Andy, Lisa and Art, Abby Hutchinson’s dad, further protected the remaining ranch acreage. In partnership with multiple organizations, including the Land Trust, the Trust for Public Land and the Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust, the Hutchinson ranch is protected in perpetuity by a conservation easement.

The Hutchinsons are also cooperating with the Land Trust and its partner Collegiate Peaks Anglers Chapter of Trout Unlimited in restoring and protecting the South Arkansas River section that flows through the ranch. The restoration effort with private landowners aims to improve the wildlife habitat and water quality of the South Arkansas.

Guest speaker at the Land Trust fundraiser was Santa Fe-based Quivira Coalition co-founder and creative director Courtney White.

For more information about the Land Trust, visit ltua.org or call 539-7700.