

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Conservation Groups Will Assess Alternative Methods for Valuing Conservation Work

CSU delivers valuation tool that will help develop future pilot program

Oct. 26, 2020 – DENVER – [Keep It Colorado](#) and the [Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust \(CCALT\)](#) partnered with Colorado State University (CSU) to conduct research and develop a tool that will enable conservation practitioners in Colorado to assess alternative ways of valuing conservation on private lands. The report, “Alternative methods for substantiating payments for conservation easements in Colorado,” was published this month.

Conservation easements permanently prevent the conversion of working landscapes, open spaces and wildlife habitat into commercial, industrial and residential uses. Presently, conservation easements are valued based on the lost opportunity to convert their lands to uses that are valued more highly in the real estate market, including surface development rights, water rights and, sometimes, energy development rights.

By contrast, alternative valuation methods could open new doors for valuing land beyond financial gains as determined through the appraisal process. Instead of being valued by development loss, the land would be valued according to the conservation opportunities and benefits it brings to communities across Colorado. Such benefits include healthy wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration (keeping carbon in the ground), clean water and reduced soil erosion, among others.

Keep It Colorado has been convening a small cross-section of stakeholders, including land trusts, landowners and economists, to review CSU’s research. The group’s next steps will be to identify the most plausible methods and engage a broader group of stakeholders to solicit feedback. From there, the group will identify projects on which to test the method and compare it against the current model, make adjustments, and lay plans to launch a pilot program.

“Conservation is not anti-development. At its root, it is about striking a balance that ensures that society can continue to thrive alongside nature,” said Erik Glenn, executive director of Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust.

Glenn continued, “For too long, we have used a system to value conservation efforts that is based on a hypothetical analysis of the economic impact of removing future development opportunities on a property. This process is complex and places the value not on what is being conserved, but rather on what is hypothetically being given up. By creating alternative methods to valuing conservation that is based on what we are conserving, we can better achieve the balance that is necessary for a vibrant, healthy and sustainable future. That is what’s at the heart of this transformational research.”

“Developing alternative methods for valuing conservation has long been a topic of discussion among the land trust community, and we have eagerly awaited this chance to help get it off the ground,” said Melissa Daruna, executive director of Keep It Colorado. “Our hope is to proactively create new avenues for conservation, not merely as a way to offset development, but to protect the lands and waters that provide so much benefit to the people and wildlife of Colorado.”

Keep It Colorado and CCALT commissioned CSU professor and associate head of CSU's Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, Dr. Andrew Seidl, to conduct the research. Funding for the project was supported by The Trinchera Blanca Foundation, founded by conservation philanthropist Louis Bacon, and Bob Tate, a longtime supporter of conservation in Colorado.

The 29-page report is available for download on CSU's website [here](#). It includes links to a spreadsheet-based tool to investigate the approaches covered in the report. The report is also available for download on Keep It Colorado's [website](#). Additional information can be obtained by contacting Melissa Daruna at melissa@keepitco.org.

About Keep It Colorado

Keep It Colorado is a nonprofit coalition of land trusts, public agencies and conservation champions that is driving a new conservation movement in Colorado. The members' on-the-ground initiatives in local communities are working to ensure that Colorado's people, lands, waters and wildlife thrive – and that our natural outdoor spaces and places stay beautiful and protected forever. To support coalition members in their work, Keep It Colorado serves as a unified voice that advocates for sound public policy; provides connection and collaboration opportunities; offers a forum to address emerging issues and opportunities around conservation; and engages communities on the importance of conservation for our state's future. Learn more at www.keepitco.org.

About Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust

The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) is a nonprofit land conservation organization whose mission is to "...conserve Colorado's western heritage and working landscapes for the benefit of future generations." To date, CCALT has conserved more than half a million acres across Colorado and partnered with more than 350 ranching and farming families. Learn more at www.ccalt.org.

About The Trinchera Blanca Foundation

The Trinchera Blanca Foundation, the Colorado affiliate of The Moore Charitable Foundation, founded by Louis Bacon in 1992, supports organizations committed to protecting land, water and wildlife habitat in Colorado's San Luis Valley. The Trinchera Blanca Foundation also supports community programs dedicated to improving quality of life in the surrounding region. Learn more at www.moorecharitable.org.

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