

preserving the present for the future

Crested Butte Land Trust



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Strategic Plan 2011-2013



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Introduction

This Strategic Plan is the first of its kind for the Crested Butte Land Trust (CBLT). It updates our mission, creates a new vision, outlines guiding values, and establishes our goals for the period from 2011 to 2013. As reviewed and approved by the CBLT Board of Directors, the Plan will guide our activities over the next three years.

The Plan was developed after reaching out to the community through in-depth interviews with local residents, conservation leaders, and others for whom the protection of open space is vital. We are grateful to the many community members who value CBLT's role in protecting the natural amenities and iconic landscapes of this beautiful area. The Plan is a living document and reflects the input of these community members.

Our First Decades



The inspiration for the Crested Butte Land Trust came from concerned Gunnison County residents, who felt that their cherished landscapes were at risk. Open meetings arranged by a joint effort from the towns of Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte in the early 1990's revealed that open space was a priority. The seeds to create a local land trust were planted.

The early vision of these land conservationists was to preserve local natural lands, particularly green spaces between communities. Their efforts were initially concentrated on acquiring land in the upper East River Valley. CBLT's purpose was "to preserve the present for the future."

CBLT made its first acquisition in the Slate River Valley at the confluence of Coal Creek and the Slate River, purchasing 10.74 acres in 1992. This easily accessible and richly abundant natural area supports healthy wildlife and plant species, and offers spectacular views. Fueled by the passion and commitment of its founding board members, the grassroots organization recognized all the amenities land conservation provides to the community. For 19 years the Crested Butte Land Trust has been a leader in developing creative and inclusive solutions to meet the land conservation challenges which this resort community has faced and continues to face.

Offering a gift to future generations, by 2010 CBLT had protected over 17 miles of trails and 5,200 acres of open lands, contributing to the preservation of Gunnison County's unique heritage and quality of life. With an impressive resume of accomplishments and awards, CBLT has worked with over 60 willing landowners and their families. CBLT honors and thanks its founders, former board members, volunteers, staff, funders, and partner conservation organizations, all of whom devoted time, energy and enthusiasm to develop CBLT as a successful community land conservation organization.

Where We Stand Today



The mission of the Crested Butte Land Trust is to forever protect and steward open lands for vistas, recreation, wildlife and ranching, thus contributing to the preservation of Gunnison County's unique heritage and quality of life.

The views of the valleys of Crested Butte and Gunnison are powerful and inspiring: the lush green hay meadows with grazing cattle; distant snow capped peaks; the magnificence of Paradise Divide; and the crystal clear waters of the creeks and springs feeding into the Slate, East and Gunnison Rivers. However, despite the work of CBLT and others to date, much of the landscape in Gunnison County remains unprotected. It could fall victim to sprawl, compromising the natural beauty recognized as essential to this community's way of life. In short, there is much work still to do.

To accomplish this work successfully and efficiently, CBLT is transitioning from a grassroots land conservation organization to an accredited land trust. The Land Trust Alliance accreditation process will assure that CBLT meets national quality standards and has the systems in place to protect important natural places and working lands forever. Work towards accreditation, which is well underway, has already led to more efficient, effective, transparent and workable procedures to guide CBLT's programs.

A second feature of CBLT's current evolution is a renewed commitment to stewardship and management of lands already under our protection. Because CBLT protects lands for future generations, our ongoing stewardship responsibilities ensure that the integrity and quality of the landscape is maintained and sustained.

A third feature is continued diligence in acquiring interests in new lands. Four new conservation projects are slated for completion by December 2010, including the Kochevar Project, which protects an additional 384 acres in the Slate River Valley. CBLT is acting now to cultivate other new projects.

As the community land trust, CBLT knows the landscapes intimately, and we work with willing landowners to craft conservation projects individually suited to landowners' particular conservation goals. CBLT provides a vital, on-the-ground link between landowners and the public interest, and we carefully weigh the benefits of each project.

At the core of CBLT's mission is securing protection of open lands, while offering public access to preserved and public lands, where appropriate, through voluntary agreements and collaboration among the many interests that are affected.

Our Vision for the Future

CBLT has much more to accomplish. Providing access to trails and conserving ranches and wildlife habitat will continue to be every bit as challenging as it has been in the past- perhaps more so as the current economy erodes public funding sources and individuals' ability to contribute.

The world in which CBLT operates today is very different from the world that existed when the organization was founded. Many more people live in the valley, property interests are more expensive, and regulations have increased significantly.

To successfully protect the public's interest in land preservation, CBLT must have broad support. A governing Board of Directors, which establishes a strategic vision, galvanizes public support, builds credibility, and raises funds will allow CBLT to achieve heightened outreach to public stakeholders and funders. Increased capacity through a professional staff, with adequate resources to manage operations and stewardship programs, will enable CBLT to increase protection of beneficial lands.



Chad Martens



Chad Martens



Rebecca Weil



After rigorous review of our stakeholders' expectations for land conservation in and around Gunnison County, CBLT's Strategic Plan adopts six broad goals for the three years ahead:

- Increase the acreage of protected lands and increase our trail easements in Gunnison County;
- Enhance CBLT's working relationships with community organizations;
- Improve relationships with and develop a deeper understanding of the ranching community;
- Enhance CBLT's Stewardship Program;
- Improve the governance and management of CBLT; and
- Improve the financial position of CBLT to further our mission.

To achieve these goals will require a great deal of work- meeting more than 80 objectives on the way to fulfilling the preceding goals. Please, review the Plan to see what's on CBLT's plate in the years ahead.

CBLT's key ambition is to remain a robust land trust which fills a critical role for the community. Together, with your support, we can determine what Gunnison County will look like in five, 20 or 100 years. We will continue to work hard every day to keep critical landscapes intact, provide miles of new trails, protect wildlife habitat, and support the efforts of working ranchers. We are confident that we can and will achieve our vision.



SWOT- Where the Plan Began

SWOT is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. This tool is often used in strategic planning to set the stage for the work to follow. In January 2010, the CBLT Strategic Planning Committee, at one of their first meetings, completed this analysis showing the climate under which the plan was conceived. This SWOT analysis is shown in our Strategic Plan after the Goals section.

Mission Statement



The mission of the Crested Butte Land Trust is to forever protect and steward open lands for vistas, recreation, wildlife and ranching, thus contributing to the preservation of Gunnison County's unique heritage and quality of life.

Vision Statement



We see a future where our forests, our rivers, our mountains, our unique wetlands and our rich ranching heritage- those things that define this extraordinary place we call Gunnison County- are preserved forever, are cared for by supportive communities and are cherished by all as an exceptional gift to future generations.

Values Statement



- We believe in the preservation and protection of the land.
- We believe in providing community access to the land, while respecting private property concerns.
- We believe in preserving and protecting the flora and fauna of our natural habitat.
- We value our view sheds and are committed to protecting them.
- We respect, value and strive to preserve our unique ranching heritage.
- We believe open space conservation is an important element of a healthy, recreation-based economy.
- We believe our success is enhanced through collaborative relationships with individuals and organizations.
- We are a non-political organization.

Goals

Goal 1. Increase the acreage of protected lands and increase our trail easements in Gunnison County.

1. Identify and prioritize potential land acquisition areas in Gunnison County.
2. Identify specific land and trail property acquisitions.
3. Proactively obtain land and trail interests and access.

Goal 2. Enhance the working relationships of the Land Trust with community organizations.

1. Develop a set of “CBLT Key Messages” to consistently frame our communications with the community.
2. Systematically increase the frequency, effectiveness and diversity of Land Trust communications with the community.
3. Develop and strengthen collaborative relationships with community organizations.
4. Increase community outreach.
5. Upgrade the CBLT website to include more timely and proactive communications with the community.



Brian Krill



Kurt Reise



Rebecca Weil



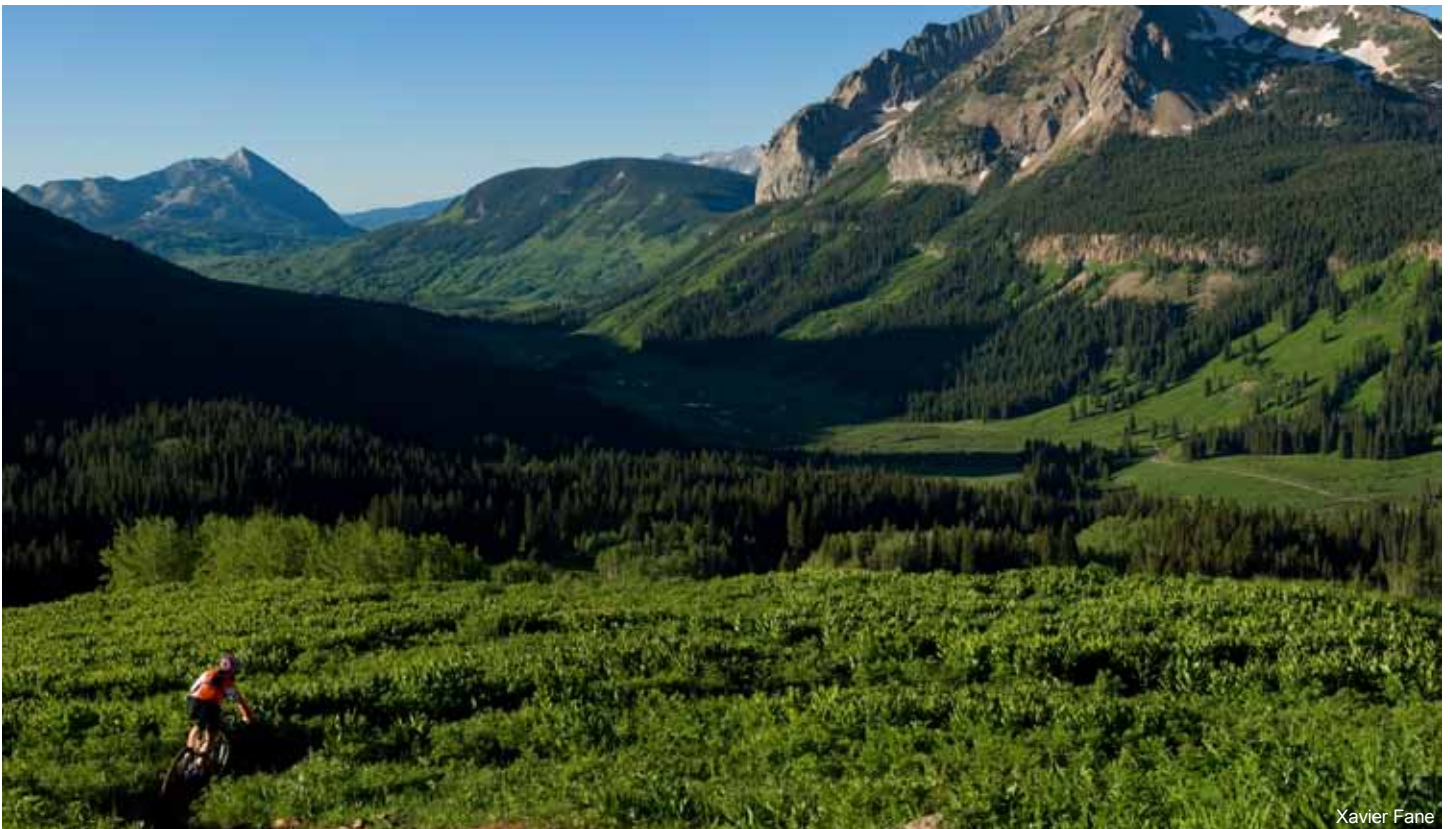
Chad Martens

Goal 3. Improve relationships with and develop a deeper understanding of the perspectives of the ranching community.

1. Listen to the perspective of the ranching community.
2. Improve relationships with Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy.
3. Recognize the impact of recreation on working ranches when considering all current and future acquisition projects.

Goal 4. Enhance the Land Trust's Stewardship Program.

1. Improve the effectiveness and professionalism of CBLT's Stewardship Program.
2. Implement a Landowner Relations Program with landowners who hold property subject to a CBLT conservation easement.



Xavier Fane

Goal 5. Improve the Land Trust's governance and management.

1. Achieve Land Trust Alliance accreditation to demonstrate that we utilize national quality standards for protecting our important lands.
2. Examine, clarify and update CBLT's governance and management policies and practices.
3. Create a Board of Directors with more diverse backgrounds and skills.
4. Adopt a set of principles and policies which establish appropriate board member conduct.
5. Improve board member continuing education.
6. Improve the functioning of the CBLT standing board committees.
7. Clarify the expectations for staff and volunteer personnel and ensure a continuing supply of qualified employees.
8. Regularly review CBLT staff workload and resources versus CBLT commitments to prevent staff burn-out or excessive staff turnover.
9. Ensure ready availability of CBLT documents to board and staff to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

Goal 6. Improve the financial position of the Land Trust to further our mission.

1. Increase CBLT's Stewardship Fund from \$460,000 to \$600,000.
2. Reduce CBLT's cumulative property purchase debt level from the current \$700,000 to \$350,000.
3. Increase annual CBLT contributions (including revenue from fundraisers) from \$280,000 to \$450,000.
4. Increase non-acquisition grant funding from \$10,000 to \$50,000 per year.
5. Increase the commitment of the Board of Directors to support annual CBLT development (fundraising) activities.
6. Increase and improve the level of CBLT's financial openness and transparency within the community.



SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- **The Mission:** The mission of CBLT has almost universal appeal in the community.
- **Community Benefits:** CBLT's open space programs provide recreational, spiritual and economic benefits to all residents of and visitors to the upper East River Valley.
- **Record of Accomplishment:** CBLT has an excellent track record of accomplishments despite limited resources.
- **Strong Staff:** CBLT has a highly competent, motivated staff led by an experienced, effective Executive Director.
- **Strong Board:** CBLT's Board of Directors consists of respected community members with a broad set of valuable skills and a strong commitment to the organization.
- **Local Funding:** CBLT has historically enjoyed the support of local funding sources such as RETT, the Gunnison Valley Land Preservation Board and the 1% for Open Space program.
- **Relationships with other Conservation Organizations:** CBLT enjoys excellent working relationships with the Rocky Mountain Biological Lab, Great Outdoors Colorado, the Trust for Public Land and The Nature Conservancy.
- **Board Member Selection Process:** The use of an independent Review Committee to evaluate board candidates helps ensure that a broad and diverse community has access to board membership.



WEAKNESSES

- **Strategic Planning:** Historically, CBLT has been more reactive than proactive in accomplishing its mission.
- **Fundraising:** Fundraising has not kept pace with CBLT's evolution from a small, grassroots, largely volunteer organization to an accredited, professional organization. The importance of unrestricted giving which enables CBLT to fulfill its program and stewardship obligations has not been adequately conveyed.
- **Relations with Governmental Bodies:** CBLT's relations with local, state and national governmental bodies should be stronger and more collaborative.
- **Outreach and Communication:** CBLT needs to communicate its mission, achievements and programs more effectively. Outreach with the ranching community, landowners and other residents should be more frequent and mutually beneficial.
- **Board Training, Size and Representation:** The size of CBLT's board, which relies on an active committee structure, should be enlarged to increase efficiency and broaden community representation. A formalized training program needs to be developed.
- **Staff Work Load:** Current staff workload is excessive and may, over time, result in burn-out.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Land Prices and Development Pressures:** The ongoing economic slowdown has resulted in lower land prices and less pressure from competing buyers.
- **Large, Strategically Important Areas Unprotected:** Important strategically located open space- thought by many to be public land- is unprotected.
- **Improve Organizational Effectiveness:** CBLT can improve its organizational effectiveness and level of credibility by implementing its Strategic Plan and achieving Land Trust Alliance accreditation.
- **Improve Fundraising Capacity:** CBLT must become more active and creative in obtaining grants and donations.
- **Become More Creative in the Preservation of Open Space with Limited Funds:** CBLT can become more creative in open space and access preservation, despite limited funds, through the use of devices such as conservation easements and conservation development.
- **Improve Communication and Outreach:** CBLT can improve communication with local ranchers and other land owners, as well as improve the reach and quality of its communications with the broader community.
- **Increase Board Size:** CBLT can increase board size to broaden community representation and attract needed competencies.

THREATS

- **Future Funding Sources:** The adverse impact of the currently weak economy on funders and the charitable capacity of potential donors, coupled with increased numbers of nonprofit organizations seeking funding, threatens to reduce funding needed by CBLT to accomplish its mission.
- **Renewed Development as the Economy Improves:** As the economy improves, real estate prices will begin to rise and development pressures in sensitive areas will increase. Once a sensitive area is developed it is almost certainly lost forever.
- **Misperceptions in the Community:** Misperceptions exist which foster active criticism of and opposition to land conservation and CBLT within some segments of the community.



Nathan Bilow

Strategic Planning Committee

The Strategic Planning Committee was comprised of:

Current members of the CBLT Board of Directors-
Keith Bauer, Peter Kennel, Joe Currier and Chuck McGinnis

Former members of the CBLT Board of Directors-
Jeff Hermanson and Sandy Leinsdorf

CBLT Executive Director-
Ann Johnston

Community Consultant-
Bruce Driver

Board of Directors

The Crested Butte Land Trust Strategic Plan 2011-2013 was adopted on October 1, 2010 by CBLT's full Board of Directors comprised of:

Keith Bauer- President, Peter Kennel- Vice-President, Tim Mueller- Treasurer, Fred Holbrook- Secretary, Beth Appleton, David Baxter, Joe Currier, Margery Feldberg, Karen Janssen and Chuck McGinnis



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