



# Montezuma Land Conservancy

*...permanently protecting  
important open lands in  
partnership with landowners—  
in order to conserve agricultural,  
natural and scenic open space  
resources...*

MLC Bulletin

Autumn 2007

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## A Waterfall, A River, and A Lake

Water's growing importance to human and natural communities in our arid climate is undeniable, and Montezuma Land Conservancy is delighted partner with several landowners this year on conservation easements that protect lands with unique water features.

Our most recently completed projects protect a stretch of the West Fork of the Dolores River, a waterfall in Trail Canyon, and wetlands and shoreline habitat near Totten Lake. The diverse landscapes and habitats represented in these properties illustrate the ecological variability that occurs throughout our counties.

Landowners Pati and David Temple have donated a 200-acre conservation easement along lower Trail Canyon to protect its significant natural habitat and scenic open space. Situated west of Cortez, Trail Canyon is a deep pinyon-juniper forested canyon drained by a perennial stream flowing into McElmo Canyon. Remote and inaccessible, the undeveloped canyon bottom provides refuge for an abundance of wildlife which benefits from the canyon's connection to large expanses of public lands. The canyon serves as a major linkage between the uplands north of McElmo Canyon and Ute Mountain Ute Reservation lands to the south.

The Temple easement borders BLM lands on two sides and its most stunning feature is a waterfall which cascades 50 feet into a plunge pool and watering hole for birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals. Nearly one mile of riparian habitat along Trail Canyon Creek supports a Rio Grande cottonwood and willow community that provides additional water, abundant forage, and cover for animals moving through and inhabiting the area. Committed land stewards, the Temples have donated three conservation easements in southwestern Colorado that protect native plant communities and wildlife habitat. Just east of Cortez, in Montezuma County's rapidly developing central valley, a thoughtful family has donated a conservation easement on 63 acres north of Totten Lake Wildlife Area. Their vision for



Bill Hatcher

this land as a bird sanctuary and wildlife refuge has led to the thirty-five years of cooperation with the Division of Wildlife, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Ducks Unlimited to create wetlands and ponds, control weeds, and plant native species.

Bisected by Rocky Ford Creek, the property's wide range of wetland and upland communities supports a remarkable diversity of birds and animals. Extensive wetlands and upland vegetation provide erosion control, nutrient and sediment filtration, and increased water retention. These services directly benefit the public as the waters from this property flow into Totten Reservoir which is used for recreation and irrigation. And people who enjoy fishing, boating, bird-watching, and ice-



**MONTEZUMA  
LAND  
CONSERVANCY**

*... helping Montezuma and Dolores Counties retain their rural character through the conservation of open lands —so future generations will enjoy the unique landscape and quality of life of southwestern Colorado.*

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# New Frontiers of Conservation

~ Reflections from MLC's Board of Directors on the National Land Trust Conference

Dear MLC Members and Friends,

MLC's work in southwest Colorado is part of growing land conservation work nationwide. We are joined by over 1,600 land trusts across America who are members of the Land Trust Alliance (LTA). LTA promotes voluntary private land conservation to benefit communities and natural systems. LTA builds land conservation strategies, represents land trusts' interests in Washington, and annually convenes its members.

LTA's 2007 convention was held last month in Denver which enabled six of MLC's staff and board members to attend at modest cost. While the conference participants sometimes gathered to hear speakers including photographer John Fielder, naturalist Craig Childs, and Senator Ken Salazar, the real meat of the conference was in the seminars. These smaller workshops covered topics such as how to protect working lands, improve biodiversity conservation, carry out easement stewardship effectively, and how to manage a land trust legally and ethically.

As you know, MLC's commitment to protect the conservation values of land is perpetual—a pretty long time. Many of the best workshops focused on how to manage difficult situations that can arise for any organization or landowner who is in it for the long haul. We discussed strategies for managing changes in land ownership, changes of water rights, and changes in climate. We explored how evolving land uses adjacent to conservation easements can affect their biologic or agricultural integrity and how to defend against condemnation of conserved lands which, being mostly undeveloped, often make attractive locations for utility and energy infrastructure construction.

We listened to representatives of the Internal Revenue Service, learned how to review a land appraiser's report of value, and how to preserve and re-tell the stories of people living with the land. I was impressed that even after four days of workshops, the sessions ran late and nobody left early—the thousands of people attending this year's LTA conference were as engaged as we were.

MLC's delegation returned from Denver with lots of ideas and to-do lists. As we conclude another successful and busy year

of land protection, we are also building MLC as a long-term outfit and learning how to do our work more effectively. As always, we welcome your comments and appreciate your interest and support.

~ Jim Merrill

A national rally brings home the feeling of being part of the much larger national land trust movement which is comprised of 100,000 volunteers and 2 million members. Most land trusts are small community-based organizations trying to respond to local needs and deeply held connections to the land. It is extremely helpful to share experiences and hear from experts about the legal challenges, IRS standards, perpetual funding dilemmas, and the longevity and continuity required for land conservation. It can be a daunting task, but land trusts have successfully conserved 37 million acres of land nationwide.

The IRS was a presenter of particular interest to everyone. "Public benefit" was one of the key principles that they stressed. The government gives special tax advantages to property owners who donate conservation easements but we as the land trust must convincingly document the public benefit of that donation. They were candid in explaining what must be done to avoid their scrutiny.

After attending several seminars on fundraising and board structure, I eagerly attended a presentation on native pollinators. With the advent of the "colony collapse disorder" among European honeybees, native bees and wasps are increasingly important for the future of field crops, orchards, and gardens—all dependent upon honeybee pollination. There are 4,000 species of native bees in North America; the greatest concentration of which are concentrated in the Southwest. We hope to sponsor a pollinator field trip with Bob Fuller of the NRCS next spring.

~ Karen Holmgren

Part of an organization's legal defense rests on the quality of easement monitoring. For this reason it is essential to select a qualified and seasoned monitor to evaluate easements on an annual basis. Good communication with the landowner is an important ingredient for a successful site visit and scheduling should include landowner participation.

~ Linda Honeycutt

# Thankful for an Active Autumn

Looking out the window at flowers blooming in November, and realizing that the trees again need watering, it is easy to compare MLC's nonstop activity with this seemingly endless autumn. Year end easement closings and exciting new projects, annual property visits, grant reports and new applications, member communications, involvement in crucial state-wide conservation issues, staff and board of director changes, and 2008 budgeting and planning are keeping things hopping at the MLC office.

## San Juan Skyway Update

At the same time that MLC wraps up the first phase of the San Juan Skyway Initiative—which was funded in part by Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) in December, 2004—we are in the final stages of a second grant application to GOCO to fund additional projects in the Dolores and Mancos River Valleys. The initiative has spurred unprecedented conservation success and partnership support resulting in 2,500 protected acres along ten river miles.

The landowner and partner enthusiasm experienced during the last three years have encouraged MLC to compete for this second GOCO Legacy Grant, a large-scale funding opportunity offered only once every three years. A decision in December will indicate whether MLC receives \$2.5 million in grant funds to work with additional landowners along the Mancos and Dolores Rivers. Special thanks go to Senator Jim Isgar for speaking on behalf of our ranchland protection work to the GOCO Board in Golden last month.



GOCO Board Members Tom Swanson, Senator Norma Anderson and Senator Peggy Reeves admire their investments in the Dolores River Valley.

## Good Luck Shirley!

For the past two years, Shirley Powell worked diligently as MLC's Development and Administration Manager—an unwieldy title that doesn't do justice to the countless ways in which Shirley committed herself to MLC. Shirley's primary charge was to



Shirley Powell, center, works with volunteers Bill and Sue Hensler at MLC's silent auction.

increase MLC's fundraising capacity. In doing so, she organized our membership and grant-writing programs, researched and wrote several successful grants, assisted with events, organized volunteers, and streamlined our office filing system. Shirley accomplished these tasks under continuous interruption while serving also as our front office receptionist.

Shirley recently resigned her position at MLC to focus her significant talents on research and writing at Crow Canyon Archaeological Center, an organization whose mission is closely aligned with Shirley's professional background as a doctor of Anthropology and former professor at Northern Arizona University. Fortunately for MLC, Shirley believes strongly in our mission and will remain a priceless volunteer on our fundraising committee.

Shirley, thank you for all you have done for MLC. We miss you already and wish you well in your Crow Canyon endeavors.

## Welcome Julie!

Julie Crawford joined the staff of MLC this summer through the Colorado Conservation Trust's Conservation Fellow Program, created to give recent graduates

hands-on experience working with conservation organizations.

Since Julie's arrival, she has organized our easement stewardship program to ensure careful and complete annual monitoring of the conservation easements we hold. Remember that when MLC accepts a conservation easement, we assume the perpetual obligation to monitor those easements and ensure that the terms specified in the easement are upheld. Consequently, our easement stewardship responsibilities continue to grow exponentially as MLC completes new projects.

Julie is also developing our Geographic Information System (GIS)—a series of computerized maps that show wildlife habitat, productive soils, vegetation type, etc. Julie will use this information to draft a strategic conservation plan which will help MLC focus its conservation efforts on the most important places. MLC looks forward to sharing more with our members and community stakeholders as we develop this plan.

Julie, your extensive background in botany and ecology is a tremendous asset to MLC. It is great to have you on board!

## Thank You Marianne and Kate!



Marianne Mate

Founding Board Member Marianne Mate has resigned her directorship after eight years of volunteering her time at MLC. Marianne was instrumental in incorporating MLC as a non-profit land trust in 1998, and continued her role as a board member, serving as president, vice-president, and secretary during her tenure. In recognition of her outstanding service, Marianne was crowned Harvest Queen at this year's Beer Festival. Marianne, we will miss your enthusiasm and *see "Busy Autumn" on p.5*

# Images of Conserva ...partnering with people



## New Easements

*con't. from front page*

skating on Totten Lake will take pleasure in knowing that their views to the northeast will be protected.

More than 2,000 feet above Trail Canyon, just north of the Montelores line in Dolores County, MLC has completed its first conservation easement along the wonderful West Fork of the Dolores River. Although a relatively small easement at 40 acres, Thomas and Susan Kurpius' property is completely surrounded by the San Juan National Forest. This inholding status increases a smaller parcel's conservation value because of its connection to large expanses of forested public lands.

The Kurpius' donated easement protects ponderosa pine and spruce-fir- aspen forests on the hillsides and blue spruce-cottonwood forests along the river. The diverse and mature shrubs in these forest communities include juniper, bitterbrush, rose, snowberry, thimbleberry, service-berry, chokecherry, gooseberry, red-osier dogwood, barberry, birch, and willow.

During this very dry fall, Montezuma Land Conservancy is especially thankful to work with these generous landowners who are protecting important lands and rare water resources.

*page 4*



ation...  
e connected to the land



## Busy Autumn

*con't. from page 3*

dedication to MLC, but are confident that your passion for this community will manifest in many other arenas.

Kate Kearns of Mancos also resigned her directorship after welcoming her new daughter, Adelaide, into her family. Kate, we appreciate your dedication to many community issues. Congratulations Kate, Todd, Asa, and Simon!

### Focus Groups Help MLC

As part of an organizational assessment funded by the Colorado Conservation Trust, MLC conducted focus groups and interviews to gather community input about MLC and in local land conservation issues.

Forty-four community members comprised of landowners, natural resource agencies, media, local government, business owners, and MLC supporters provided useful comments in July. They expressed concern about rampant development and loss of farms, ranches, wildlife habitat, and open space and increasing land values that may entice farmers and ranchers to sell land to developers. The overriding sentiment was that MLC fills crucial niche working with landowners, and that we need to reach out even more to property owners and community leaders. Participants felt that MLC operates with integrity, openness, honesty, and respect.

The following priorities were identified for MLC:

- Develop a strategic land conservation plan to ensure that MLC focuses on lands most important to this community;
- Improve our communications and marketing to reach a broader base of landowners and supporters;
- Develop the fundraising and organizational infrastructure to sustainably accomplish conservation goals.

### Legislators Convene Task Force

MLC attended the first in a series of Tax Credit Task Force meetings convened by Representative Alice Madden and Senator Jim Isgar to examine the Colorado Conservation Easement State Tax Credit. The tax credit is a wonderful financial incentive for conservation easement donors to protect lands of significant conservation benefit to the public. Recent reports of tax credit abuse have prompted both the conservation community and lawmakers to look at ways to protect the program against questionable transactions that involve either overstated easement values or insignificant properties. MLC believes that the vast majority of land trusts is working within the spirit and the letter of the law, and strongly supports state and federal efforts to prevent abuses from undermining this extremely powerful tool.

## Photographs by Bill Hatcher

**Clockwise from top left:** MB and Chuck McAfee amidst their 2,300-acre conservation easement; Colorado River Cutthroat Trout habitat on Dolores River tributary; Bud Walker preg checking cows this fall; sterilizing wine barrels at Sutcliffe Vineyards; bringing in the hay on the Murphy Farm; working the livestock on Redburn Ranch.



# Thank You Members and Supporters

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The following contributions have been received between April 2 and November 12, 2007. Please call us if you see an error.

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Thanks for a great

## Please

## A Holiday Gift to

Give your best friends, neighbors, and loved ones a meaningful thoughtful gift helps preserve local land and leaves our generations and strengthen

## Your Support Make

One of the most critical aspects of managing a land trust easements in perpetuity. A comprehensive fund implementation. Our primary goal is to diversify and sources, expanding our membership base, creating an en

## Conserve the landscape that helps de

While MLC receives significant grant funding restricted fund MLC operations. Individual contributions are the landowners and develop the partne

If you have received this newsletter and are not currently a contributing member, please make a special holiday gift available to meet your needs: a one-time gift; monthly donations and gifts of personal property. For more

# s, for Making Conservation Happen!

Stephen Sloan  
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## Make for Local Good

MLC membership subscription this holiday season. This is only a paper trail. It is a gift that keeps giving to future generations and our membership support.

## Make All the Difference

Ensuring sustainability to steward our conservation and fundraising plan must accompany MLC's conservation efforts. Stabilize MLC's income stream by exploring all revenue options: endowment fund, and continuing cultivation of our donors.

## Improve our community and quality of life

Invested in projects, very little of this revenue is available to build the bricks and mortar that allow MLC to work directly with the partnerships necessary to conserve land.

As an MLC member, please join today. If you are already a member, please join today. Many gift options are available: reduction; planned gift; gift of stock, bonds or annuities; for more information please call us at 565-1664.

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# Holiday Greetings from the Montezuma Land Conservancy



Bill Hatcher

Autumn 2007



P.O. Box 1522~Cortez, CO 81321

complimentary issue - please join today

## MLC has a Website!

Please go to  
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