



# THE LEGACY

## Newsletter of the Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy Fall 2025

Dear Friends –

Another productive year of ranchland conservation is behind us, and winter is setting in. The annual cycle of ranching operations in the Gunnison Country is always different in details, yet somehow fundamentally the same.

And that is how I am feeling this year as the new (and yet quite familiar!) Executive Director of GRCL. Stacy McPhail has moved on to other opportunities after 11 years of outstanding leadership. My affection and admiration for her are profound. We have been working together so closely that assuming these added responsibilities seems like second nature.

Since founding GRCL 30 years ago I have had several roles: Board Member, Projects Director, author of baselines and other reports, grant writer, and even Executive Director a few times in the past. GRCL activities are familiar to me, which reduces the anxiety I might feel at starting a new position at an age when I really should be thinking of retiring (I am not!).

We completed some excellent conservation easement projects in 2025, and we have more ready for 2026. I want to express my gratitude and respect for the landowners whose conservation vision I am honored to assist, and also for our volunteer Board, donors and friends who support our mission.

Susan Lohr  
Executive Director

GRCL is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit and relies on donations to provide services to landowners wishing to conserve their land. Donations are tax-deductible and greatly appreciated.

## CONSERVATION



### FLYING W RANCH – VULCAN

The Woodcock Family completed a conservation easement protecting 285 acres along Camp Creek and Little Willow Creek near Vulcan in southern Gunnison County. The property provides habitat for wildlife species, including Gunnison sage-grouse, and also offers seasonal grazing resources for the larger Flying W Ranch operation. This project was partially funded by grants from the Gunnison Valley Land Preservation Fund and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Colorado Open Lands holds the easement.



### SILVER SPRINGS RANCH

Lynn McDermand donated a conservation easement on 113 acres along State Highway 135 north of Gunnison. The easement protects agricultural production and also provides wildlife habitat in meadows and riparian areas along nearly a mile of the Gunnison River for several Colorado Species of Concern, including for Gunnison sage-grouse. A transaction expense grant was provided by the Gunnison Valley Land Preservation Fund. Colorado Open Lands holds the easement.

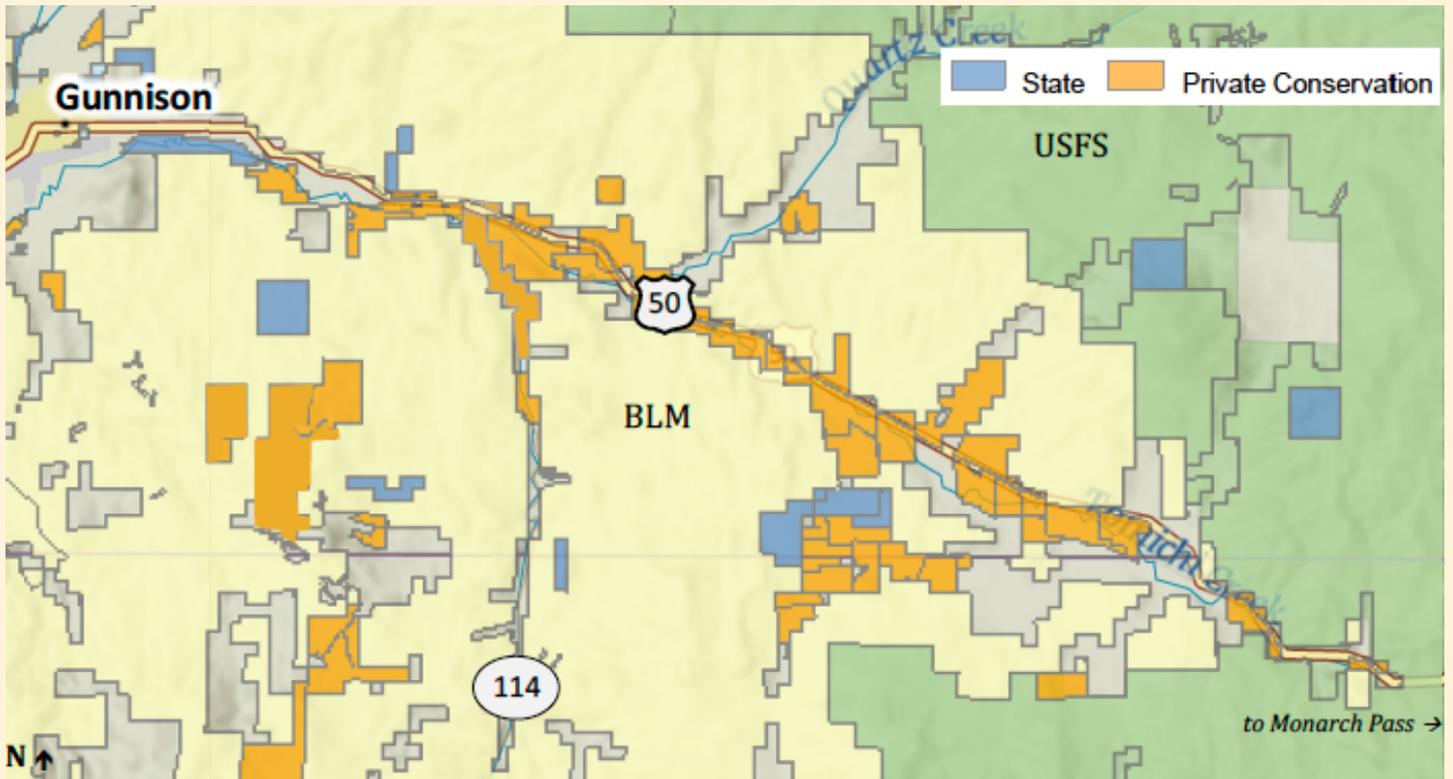


### WILLOW CREEK PROPERTY

GRCL donated a conservation easement on 100 acres along County Road 31, south of Blue Mesa Reservoir. The Woodcock family donated the land to us in 2022. The easement protects habitat resources for Gunnison sage-grouse. Currently we lease the property for seasonal grazing. A transaction expense grant was provided by the Gunnison Valley Land Preservation Fund. Colorado Open Lands holds the easement. We are applying for a Colorado Conservation Tax Credit that we can sell to generate income for our program.

## OUR MISSION

*The mission of the GRCL is to create a legacy for future generations by conserving ranchlands and preserving ranching in the Gunnison Country.*



## Tomichi Creek Valley Conservation Easements, 1995–2025

In 1995 we began to think about a process for assisting ranchers with their conservation goals. We were sure from the beginning that we would respect landowners by not prioritizing specific landscapes. Instead, we would maintain a “first-come, first-served” list of willing ranch families.

Great Outdoors Colorado and other grant sources were skeptical that we could achieve conservation without landscape priorities. We asked for their patience, confident that over time the result would be the same, but achieved without the hard feelings that can arise from pitting those on a priority list against those who are not. Fortunately, GOCO and others gave us grace, funding our efforts while letting us proceed in our own way.

This map of conserved private lands in the Tomichi Creek Valley shows the result. The map tells a story of landowners with a strong conservation ethic. Benefits from their actions are perpetual, increasing in significance as time moves on:

- Water rights are tied to the land through conservation easements.
- Neighbors have ranchers as neighbors.
- Permanent prohibitions against property division and strict restrictions on residence numbers let the county know where expanded services will not be required.
- Agricultural land can be bought and sold among ranchers at reduced prices. Subdivision and development are no longer options for real estate speculation.
- Wildlife, especially Gunnison sage-grouse but also migratory big game and numerous smaller species, can thrive on conserved habitat that is adjacent to vast expanses of public lands.

### GRCL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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### GRCL STAFF

Susan Lohr, Executive Director

Jenny Pankratz, Office Assistant

Special thanks to our partners in conservation:



Gunnison Valley Land  
Preservation Fund



The Nature  
Conservancy



Gunnison Ranchland  
Conservation Legacy

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[ColoradoGivesDay.org](https://ColoradoGivesDay.org)

Please consider a donation to GRCL between now and December 9, 2025. Every donation made through Colorado Gives gets a boost from the \$1Million+ Incentive Fund. Also, online giving is easy any time of year at [www.gunnisonlegacy.org](http://www.gunnisonlegacy.org).



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