



# 2009 Annual Report

## Notes from the Director

2009 was RiGHT's best conservation year yet. We helped five families protect their farms and ranches, water and way of life through voluntary conservation easements. Each of these properties tells a long story of the history of the San Luis Valley and the Rio Grande river. As I recently said to one landowner, "if fences could talk...". The stories those fences would tell now would be about landowners, and funders, geologists and biologists, surveyors and appraisers and all the folks that play a role in conserving land.

It is an impressive number of people that each create a piece of the puzzle that results in land conservation. We salute and honor each landowner's decision to conserve their land for its beauty, wildlife habitat, and agricultural productivity. It is a big decision and we are humbled to be a part of making their dreams for their land come true.

## Land Protection: 5,000 Acres

RiGHT closed on five conservation easements in 2009, which brings our current acreage for conservation easements up to 16,000 acres of the most critical private land in the San Luis Valley and Colorado. The cumulative values of these conservation easements total \$11.3 million dollars which is realized from contributions from funders and substantial donations from the landowners themselves.

**Cross Arrow Ranch** - This story involves four generations all living on this spectacular 3,200 acre property that encompasses the confluence of the Rio Grande and the Conejos rivers. With such a distinction, RiGHT was pleased to protect it with funding from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Co. Div. of Wildlife's Habitat Partnership Program (HPP)

**The Rio Oxbow Ranch** - The second phase of this incredible project protected 565 acres of one of the most scenic ranches on the Rio Grande. Stretching along the Silver Thread Scenic Byway in Mineral County, this ranch has six miles of the Rio Grande running through it, with some of the best trout fishing in Colorado. GOCO, NAWCA, TNC and HPP all supported this project.



**Hayes Ranch** - A more enthusiastic landowner would be hard to find. This 325 acre ranch on the river near Monte Vista has two miles of river on it and contributes to a growing corridor of protected land between Monte Vista and Alamosa on the river not totaling 6,500 acres. Funding for this project was provided by GOCO, the Gates Family Foundation and NAWCA.

**River Valley Ranch II** - Less than two miles away from the CAH Ranch, the 400 acre River Valley Ranch II is highly visible from Highway 285 and is bounded on three sides by other conservation easements. GOCO, the Gates Family Foundation, the Colorado Water Conservation Board, and HPP all helped bring this project to fruition.

**Parma Farm** - Adjacent to the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge, this 435 acre farm creates a wildlife buffer for the Refuge while remaining agriculturally productive. The Trust for Public Land lead this project with funding from GOCO, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and HPP.

*Photos (from top to bottom): Cross Arrow Ranch by John Fielder; Rio Oxbow reflections by Rio de la Vista; Kids on the River by Chris Hayes; River Valley Ranch II oxbows and ponds.*

Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust

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*Our Mission:  
To conserve our land, water, and way of life in  
Colorado's Rio Grande Basin,  
the San Luis Valley*

## The Rio Grande Initiative

2009 brought more funding success to the Initiative as well as the protection of four of the projects mentioned on page 1. In total there are 17,777 acres of private land protected along the Rio Grande with 25 different landowners protecting 30 miles of the river.

In addition to the accomplished projects, RiGHT continues to work with landowners up and down the river to conserve their properties and create meaningful landscape-scale protection of the legendary Rio Grande.

Notably, RiGHT has raised over \$15 million for the *Initiative* and has spent only 1.6% of that on project planning and implementation, with the balance of the funds going to landowners to purchase conservation easements on their farms and ranches. We continue to work collaboratively with other organizations such as The Nature Conservancy and the Colorado Conservation Trust and Ducks Unlimited to achieve our goal of 25,000 acres protected along the river.

## Throughout the Valley

The San Luis Valley is a big place and while RiGHT has a special focus on the river corridor, we continue to work throughout the entire Valley. In 2009 we completed a conservation easement adjacent to the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge and embarked upon our first conservation easement in Costilla county.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Peggy Blenden - *President*  
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Angie Krall  
Cathy Morin  
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Steve Russell  
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### STAFF & CONSULTANTS

Nancy Butler  
*Executive Director*  
Aaron Derwingson  
*Stewardship Director*  
Rio de la Vista  
*Consultant*  
Gigi Darricades  
*Legal Counsel*



*Photo: Rio de la Vista (2nd from right) with Board and staff members from the Colorado Conservation Trust together with landowners Don & Bobbi at the Jansen Ranch, protected by RiGHT in 2008.*

## Accreditation & Certification

One of our big focuses of the year has been putting together our accreditation packet for the Land Trust Alliance and along the same lines submitting our application for Certification through the Colorado Department of Revenue and Division of Real Estate. We have become Certified by the state to hold conservation easements and will learn about our Accreditation in March of 2010. Both processes took a considerable amount of time and energy and ultimately strengthened our organization by requiring us to review all our policies and procedures.

## Events

RiGHT held three events in 2009. The first one in April honored all our 2008 landowners with a special reception at a private home in South Fork.

August brought RiGHT's annual major fundraiser, the second annual "Keep the Rio Grande Grand" Art Sale in South Fork, which raised more than \$18,000 for the *Rio Grande Initiative*.

In December RiGHT partnered with the La Vereda Foundation and the Del Norte Chamber of Commerce to host their annual "Stuffed Stocking Auction," raising more than \$10,000 through a lively live auction.

## Financials

### 2009 Profit and Loss Statement

<u>INCOME</u>	
Board Contributions	\$ 2,200
Corporate Donations	\$ 7,750
Grants	\$ 134,812
Individual Contributions	\$ 6,266
Interest Income	\$ 4,148
Program Income	\$ 82,750
Special Events	\$ 24,087
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 262,013</b>

<u>EXPENSES</u>	
Accreditation/Certification	\$ 7,700
Audit	\$ 17,975
Conferences	\$ 797
Equipment	\$ 784
Insurance	\$ 3,312
Interest Exp	\$ 90
Office Supplies	\$ 4,599
Organizational Memberships	\$ 1,785
Staff & Consultants	\$ 185,528
Postage	\$ 2,200
Printing	\$ 3,650
Property Taxes	\$ 3,410
Rent & Utilities	\$ 5,085
Special Events Exp	\$ 8,309
Telephone & Internet	\$ 3,297
Travel, Food & Lodging	\$ 8,942
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 257,463</b>