

# The Rio Grande Initiative

October 2008, Vol. V



## Our Purpose:

*To protect as much private land as possible along the Rio Grande corridor in Colorado, through voluntary, incentive based means, in partnership with landowners, communities, agencies, and conservation organizations - while we have the chance!*

## RGI Project Update

*Never before has our mission to conserve intact land along the Rio Grande been more urgent. Development pressure along the river remains high, with nearly 3,000 acres of farm and ranch land sold to out-of-state developers last year alone. To date, the Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust (RiGHT) and other conservation organizations have partnered with landowners to protect over 10,000 river corridor acres, a significant step towards our goal to protect 25,000 acres in the next five years.*



*Conservation easement on the upper Rio Grande - photo by Mike Blakeman*

Thanks to dedicated landowners, the support of funders, and the hard work of RiGHT and our partners Ducks Unlimited and The Nature Conservancy, conservation easements on five outstanding properties along the Rio Grande should close by the end of the year!

Combined, these easements will protect an additional **2,250 acres** of land along the river, including one Centennial Ranch that has been in the family for over 100 years.

RiGHT is currently working on five more conservation easements on the Rio Grande. These projects are at varying stages and include ranches located throughout the valley from Mineral County to Conejos County.

Once completed, these easements will protect almost **5,000 acres**, marking further progress towards our goal of protecting 25,000 acres of land along the Rio Grande River.

## IN THIS ISSUE:

RGI Project Update

--

RiGHT's New Office

--

Grants & Fundraising

--

New CCT Fellow

--

Art Sale Success

For more information, please contact us:

Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust

P.O. Box 444 Del Norte, CO 81132

Phone: (719) 657.0800 • Fax: (888) 634.9511

right@fone.net • www.riograndelandtrust.org

## We've Moved!

After several years of sharing office space at the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge, the RiGHT has moved to Del Norte. We want to thank the US Fish & Wildlife Service for giving us a home base for so many years. While we will miss the beauty of the refuge, we appreciate the larger office and the opportunity to have a greater community presence.

Please note our new contact information, and we welcome you all to our Open House:

**Date:** Wednesday, November 5th  
**Location:** 840 Grand Ave. in Del Norte (next to Wildwood Sounds)  
**Time:** 3:30 to 5:30pm

## Grants & Fundraising Update

*It has been a great few months of fundraising for RiGHT! Thanks to the the hard work of Nancy Butler, Rio de la Vista, and Aaron Welch, RiGHT has secured funding from a wide variety of sources.*

### **North American Wetlands**

#### **Conservation Act (NAWCA):**

In September, RiGHT was awarded \$1million from NAWCA's Migratory Bird Commission for the *Rio Grande Initiative!* The majority of this grant will fund a large conservation easement in Conejos County. RiGHT submitted this grant in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project who will use \$50,000 for restoration work on BLM's McIntire-Simpson wetlands complex.

#### **The Nature Conservancy (TNC):**

Many thanks to TNC for the \$15,000 we received in August. We met recently with Paul Robertson (TNC's San Luis Valley Project Director) to discuss further funding opportunities and we look forward to continuing our partnership with TNC.

#### **Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO):**

In addition to the \$7.4 million Legacy Grant that RiGHT received last year from GOCO, we were recently awarded an additional \$665,000 in Open Space grants for two large conservation easements.

#### **Colorado Healthy Rivers Fund:**

RiGHT was awarded a \$15,000 grant from this fund, a state income tax return check-off program. This money will support outreach and education as well as the purchase of a power point projector.

**Gates Family Foundation:** RiGHT was also very grateful to receive an award of \$250,000 from the Gates Family Foundation. This money will help close two key conservation easements.

#### **Doris Duke Charitable Foundation:**

With help from The Nature Conservancy and the Colorado Conservation Trust, RiGHT will receive \$400,000 from Doris Duke to fund a premier conservation easement in Mineral County.

## New CCT Fellow joins RiGHT

Aaron Derwingson, having recently completed a Master of Community and Regional Planning degree from the University of Oregon, returns to Colorado to join the RiGHT for a two-year fellowship. As a graduate student in Oregon, Aaron worked extensively on issues related to community-based collaboration, local food systems, and sustainable development.



Aaron comes to RiGHT as part of a fellowship program supported by the Colorado Conservation Trust (CCT), a statewide non-profit dedicated to preserving threatened landscapes throughout Colorado. At RiGHT,

Aaron takes on the role of Stewardship Director where he will work on a variety of projects including land protection and stewardship, the *Rio Grande Initiative*, education, development, and outreach.

## Keep the Rio Grande Grand Art Event a Success

On August 16th, 2008 RiGHT held our first annual *Keep the Rio Grande Grand* art event and fundraiser at the South Fork Community Center. Nearly 150 people attended, and with almost \$50,000 in art sales the evening was a great success for the artists and for RiGHT, which received approximately \$18,000 of the proceeds.

"... the evening exceeded even our highest hopes for both the beauty of the art work and the response and support of our guests," said *Keep the Rio Grande Grand* Coordinator, Rio de la Vista.

RiGHT would like to thank the participating artists, our dedicated Steering Committee, our generous financial sponsors, the greater San Luis Valley community, and all who attended for their enthusiastic support. We look forward to seeing you all again next year! Mark your calendars for August 15, 2009 and check our website ([www.riograndelandtrust.org](http://www.riograndelandtrust.org)) for updates.



**Above:** RiGHT supporters and art lovers enjoy fine food and original art at the first annual *Keep the Rio Grande Grand* event.