



The foundation of a house burned by the Spring Fire sits amid flood and mud-slide debris along Pass Creek Road. (Photos by Greg Smith)

Fire, flood bring challenges, opportunities

In 2014, Kathi and Jack Thomas found their dream home in the Wet Mountains east of Westcliffe. But just two short years later, that dream went up in smoke in the Junkins Fire, an 18,000-acre conflagration that erupted in the early morning hours pushed by hurricane-force winds.

The fire destroyed the Thomases' home and burned about 200 of their acres, much of it under a conservation easement with San Isabel Land Protection Trust. But they didn't give up on their dream, and they didn't give up on the land.

"We have such an attachment to the land," they said, "we were eager to make things right again."

And San Isabel's stewardship director, Kate Spinelli, was ready to help.

"Fire recovery increasingly has become a part of our stewardship efforts," Kate said. "We've worked



A Mile-High Youth Corps crew stabilizes a hillside on the Thomas property.

to identify and secure resources and partner with agencies and federal, state and local governments. The goal is to reduce flooding; protect homes, roads and water supplies; reduce erosion; restore vegetation; and protect wildlife habitat."

The Junkins Fire is one of four major fires that have left their marks on our region since 2016. The other three are the Hayden Pass Fire in Fremont County, the Beulah Hill Fire near the town of Beulah and this summer's spectacular and costly Spring Fire in Huerfano and Costillo counties, the third largest in Colorado history. The Junkins Fire affected six conservation easements held by San Isabel. Another six easements are close to the Spring Fire burn area and are at risk for damage in years to come, especially in the Pass Creek area.

Please turn to Page 4 ...

From our Executive Director

San Isabel builds on a strong past to forge a bright future

For nearly a quarter century, you – our San Isabel supporters – have helped safeguard the inspiring vistas, open space, wildlife habitat and rural character that make this such a special place. What of value could a new executive director with only four months tenure have to say to you?

Two words: Thank you. While so much of the Front Range is parceled, parched and paved, our four-county region remains a stronghold of working wildlands that sustain wildlife, family agriculture and welcoming communities. That is due largely to people like you with the foresight and commitment to preserve what is good and vital and whole while there is still time.

But past accomplishments don't guarantee future success in changing times. Southern Colorado is in the throes of transformative change. Drought, flash floods, wildfires and noxious weeds endanger biodiversity and ecosystem function. Water transfers and development pressures require careful planning to avoid imperiling wildlife and scenic beauty. We have big challenges and tight timelines ahead as we work together to sustain this place we love so much.

Recently, 21 current and past San Isabel leaders convened to chart our future. We strategized around four key questions: What challenges and opportunities do we see in emerging trends? What do we want for our region in 20 to 50 years? What must be done to secure our vision of lasting conservation? Based on that, what are



key roles for us in the next five years?

The gist of our meeting is well expressed in a recent letter to me from Randy Woods, founding member and San Isabel's first president:

"My primary agenda in initially involving myself in this endeavor was, and still is, wildlife – both habitat and unencumbered migration, along with the beneficial consequences of viable, historic agriculture, open space, wisely regulated growth and viewshed issues. In my view, the one common denominator in all of these issues ... is water. Protecting land, without protecting the water is, well, pissin' in the wind. My input to any strategic session would be, simply, water."

How to get it done? Two more words: strategic collaboration. Our challenge is to integrate the traditional

wisdom of long-time landowners with the best of emerging science, powered by resources from both entrepreneurial approaches and philanthropy.

In the next five years, we will build on our proven strengths and accomplishments to forge diverse partnerships that leverage resources to meet our shared goals. We will expand our land care program while continuing to steward and acquire key conservation easements. We will help create regenerative responses to hotter, drier and leaner times ahead for agricultural stewards. With counties and towns, we will advance smart growth that connects people to nature while also protecting water, open space and quality of life. In all these things, we will find ways to welcome and assist the next generation of land stewards.

We are at the vanguard of land trusts building resilience in these challenging times. There is risk. But the rewards of success will be huge, and failure is not an option for the land, wildlife and communities we love.

Now more than ever, your support of San Isabel catalyzes positive change. San Isabel's bold vision for the future depends on increasing revenue by a third or more. Your contribution will be the seed used to secure partnerships to at least double its value. Please consider a generous donation now to fuel our vision for a bright future for people and nature.

With excitement for the future we will build together ...

— Linda Poole

From our President

Building resilience sets stage for healthy, productive landscape

The devastating drought of the past year is, hopefully, on its way out. But what about the next one?

Severe droughts seem to be more frequent if you remember 2002. Two of the driest seasons in 500 years have happened within the past 16 years. This trend is emerging across southern Colorado. Average temperatures are up more than 2 degrees Fahrenheit. The snowpack is melting earlier and producing less runoff on average. Vast swaths of our forests have burned, blown down or been attacked by insects. Many landowners wonder what could happen next and what they can do about it.

You hear and read the term landscape resilience with increasing frequency. What does that mean? In ecological terms, resilience is an ecosystem's capacity to respond to disturbance (fire, flood, drought, wind, insects, weeds, deforestation) by resisting damage and recovering quickly. Much of our public and private lands in this part of the state have compromised resiliency due to years of forest fire suppression, overgrazing (in some cases not enough grazing), erosion, drought, stream degradation and a host of other landscape issues.

Rebuilding landscape resilience uses prescribed methods to correct some of this long-term degradation so that landscapes (or ecosystems) can resist disturbance again by recov-



ering quickly. Thinning overgrown forests is one way to build resilience as it removes much of the excess fuel that creates the raging, high intensity fires that sterilize soils and destroy all seed sources. Restoring sinuosity to streams and replanting willows on the banks slows water, lessening erosion while the willows' roots armor the banks and their canopies reduce water temperatures. That in turn provides habitat for fish and other wildlife. The more we can slow water and allow it to soak into a creek bed or the banks, the less likely the creek will go dry late in the season or during a drought year.

The workshop San Isabel Land Protection Trust hosted with the Quivira Coalition in October demonstrated methods to use simple stone

“ The more we can slow water and allow it to soak into a creek bed or the banks, the less likely the creek will go dry ... ”

structures to reduce the erosive force of water on dry pastures and draws to help the soil capture more water so grasses and other vegetation can take root. Hay meadows can be managed to increase soil organic matter, allowing more water storage in the soil itself. Imagine being able to capture more water in the soils from rainfall and snowmelt to enhance our already limited irrigation. Plus, passively storing water in landscapes is an effective way for the land to resist drought.

These are all ways to build landscape resilience. It can be done on a large or small scale over time. The important thing is that we make the effort to rebuild resilience in all the ways possible in the face of increasing aridity in the West. San Isabel is researching ways to rebuild resilience and help landowners pay for these vital projects.

Our wildlife, forests, rangelands, crop ground, and ultimately our way of life, depend on it.

— Larry Vickerman

We bid farewell to **Kate Spinelli**, our stewardship director, who left San Isabel at the end of November. Kate joined San Isabel in 2016 to launch our stewardship services program and did a stellar job. Kate will work next on fire and flood recovery in areas affected by the 2016 Hayden Pass Fire. She also plans to pursue a graduate degree in ecology. Thank you, Kate!

We also bid farewell to longtime

On the Move

board member and treasurer **Lynn Karantz**. Lynn, a certified public accountant with more than 30 years' experience, has worked tirelessly for San Isabel in one of the most critical functions of any organization, financial reporting and oversight. Thank you, Lynn, for your dedication and service.

David Huber has joined San Isabel's board of directors and taken on the job of Finance Committee chairman, bringing his considerable business expertise to the role. His career has encompassed working for oil companies in 13 countries. David and his wife, Cynthia, own Duckett Creek Ranch in Custer County. The 400-acre ranch has been protected by conservation easements held by San Isabel since 2005.

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Stewardship Director
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Anita Bomgardner
Accountant

San Isabel Land Protection Trust is a nationally accredited 501(c)3 nonprofit, nonpartisan conservation organization working with landowners to protect land and water in southern Colorado. To date, we've protected more than 40,000 acres, 174 water rights and some 61 miles of stream frontage through 133 conservation easements.



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... Continued from Page 1

Kate said, "Post-fire flooding flushes the burn areas and is part of regeneration. But flooding can be dangerous for people and property below the burned area. Steep hillsides stripped of trees and other vegetation can't absorb or catch rainfall. Burned trees are swept downhill with water, soil, ash and other materials. The debris threaten lives, homes, roads and water quality downstream."

To help with regrowth on the Thomases' property, Kate secured a grant that in late May brought a Mile High Youth Corps crew to work to stabilize the property's steep slopes, using log erosion barriers made from burned trees. The crew also spread grass seed and planted saplings.

"The crew worked extremely hard, did a tremendous job and

were totally respectful to us, each other and the work at hand," the Thomases said. "Kate arranged the entire itinerary and brought professional folks daily to talk to the youth about training techniques, education, career initiatives. It was an amazingly successful two weeks!"

In July, the Thomases thought they were on the road to recovery. They knew what to do, and they could see progress.

"Then the rain came," the Thomases recalled. "A lot of rain, at one time, on more than one occasion. The flood destruction was not only to the burned land, but also to the unburned green forest and bottomland meadows. Our emotions were similar to when we saw the result of the fire in 2016 –

devastating. Our land was washing away, and so many others were being affected. The only exception was where the Youth Corps had worked. Those slopes held up!"

Kate points out that wildfire is essential to forest and watershed health in our fire-adapted part of Colorado.

"It helps maintain the biodiversity of plants, animals and their habitats," she said. "When fire is suppressed, the health of the forests, creeks and valleys suffers. But while regeneration

ately following the Spring Fire in the Pass Creek area of Huerfano County. San Isabel will continue to help those landowners secure resources and complete projects to maximize fire recovery work on their properties.

And we will continue to work with landowners to improve their forests before a catastrophic fire strikes. This work helps ensure forests are healthier and more resilient to fire, allowing fire to benefit the landscape and not devastate landowners and their communities.

Fire moves us to ask key questions:

- What can we learn from the process of fire?
- How can we mirror and support the restorative processes of the forest while protecting lives and our homes?
- How can we better prepare for such emergencies and continue to be ready to help our neighbors as the aftermath of the fire continues into the future?

We are committed to finding answers to these questions for the sake of our landowners and the community. Jack and Kathi Thomas, too, remain committed to the work ahead.

"We understand Mother Nature will take its course, and we continue to stay positive," they said. "San Isabel has been with us every step of the way, and we are so thankful to have them as partners. There has been so much good that has surfaced from this tragedy. We are so blessed to have the wonderful people at San Isabel help us along. We couldn't have gotten through this without them. They are true stewards of the land."

unfolds, our neighbors struggle with the fires' aftermath."

Kate has worked to bring help and expertise to our landowners. She has advocated for fire recovery resource for the Hayden Pass Fire. After the Junkins Fire, she invited fire recovery organizations, such as the Coalition for the Upper South Platte, to complete a channel diversion project to protect the home of fourth-generation rancher Bill Donley and his wife, Vicki, on the Billington Ranch. After the Thomas property and adjacent properties were hit by flooding, she brought together partners to begin a coordinated approach to managing damage there.

Kate also connected agency and organization staff with landowners coping with post-fire flooding immedi-



A burn scar from the Spring Fire looms behind a home firefighters saved off Pass Creek Road.



Ben Penkoff, 14, (left) and Garrett Olomon, 13, plant a ponderosa pine as forester Jim Webb watches their work. In June, the Trail Blazers 4-H Club planted 28 trees at Duckett Creek Ranch, replacing trees lost in the 2011 Duckett Creek Fire. (Photo by Greg Smith)

Volunteer of the Year

Mike Liebman is our 2018 Alice Proctor Outstanding Volunteer of the Year. He received the award at San Isabel Land Protection Trust's annual member appreciation event, held Aug. 12 at the Ruzanski Ranch near Westcliffe.

Mike conducts annual visits to San Isabel protected properties, an important part of the land trust's stewardship program, and he plays a key role in staging Art for the Sangres, San Isabel's largest fundraiser. He and his crew help transform the refurbished barn at A Painted View Ranch into a fine art exhibition space.

The Alice Proctor award is given annually in memory of San Isabel founder Alice Proctor, who contributed immeasurably to the formation of the land trust and helped build and strengthen the organization until her death in 2012.

In addition to San Isabel, Mike has contributed to the community through a variety of volunteer activities. His volunteer efforts at the Wet Mountain Valley Rotary Club focus on the club's youth programs. They include Rotary Exchange Students, the Rotary Youth Leadership Program and the Wet Mountain Rotary Foundation, which awards scholarships to local youth. His volunteer work also in-



Joanie Liebman looks on as Mike's award is announced. cludes community radio station KLZR, Sustainable Ways and its renewable energy home tours, and High Country Recycling's plastic recycling at Altitude Fitness Center. Mike also serves on Custer County's Affordable Housing Committee.

Our future is in your hands – donate today!

When you give to San Isabel Land Protection Trust, you plant a future that includes working ranches and farms, flowing water, scenic open space, healthy forests and wildlife.

With your help, we can be ready to:

- Protect the next ranch.
- Fight to keep agricultural water flowing in our valleys.
- Sustain the beautiful landscape that drew us here and keeps us here.

There are many ways to give to San Isabel. They include a monthly membership, a qualified charitable distribution from your IRA, giving while you shop, as well as volunteering.

Planning Your Legacy

Good planning is key to creating the kind of legacy important to you. San Isabel has developed a guide, "Planning Your Legacy," to help you plan your will and trust and prepare for potential estate decisions. The guide describes many of your options and helps you gather the information you need to get the job done.

Our Wish List

San Isabel is looking for a new field vehicle. Ideally, it would be a smaller-sized, four-door, four-wheel-drive pickup with a topper. Let us know if you'd like to donate a vehicle like this.

To learn more about donating to San Isabel Land Protection Trust, go to sanisabel.org/donate, or contact Janet Smith at 719.783.3018 or janet@sanisabel.org.

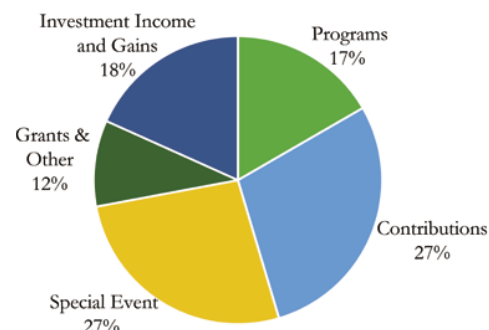


Photo by Greg Smith

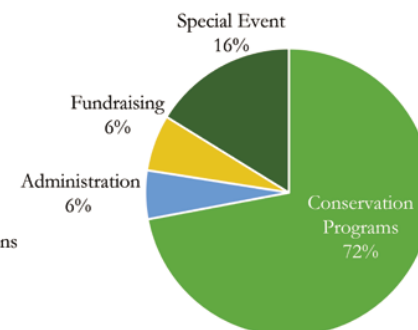
2017 Financial Report



Revenue



Expenses



Statement of Financial Position

ASSETS	
Cash and Cash equivalents	694,638
Accounts Receivable and Other	9,978
Inventory for Sale	750
Investments	1,053,829
Property & Equipment, Net of Depreciation	7,631
Total Assets*	1,766,826

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities	4,890
Deferred Revenue	100,000
Total Liabilities	104,890

TOTAL ASSET CATEGORIES

Unrestricted	453,598
Board Designated Fund	256,826
Stewardship Fund	916,281
Donor Restricted	4,210
Paul Snyder Fund	31,021
Total Net Assets	1,661,936
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	1,766,826

Statement of Activities

REVENUE	
Contributions	100,528
Program Revenue	62,656
Special Event	100,286
Grants and Other	44,041
Investment Income and Gains	68,758
Total Revenue	376,269

EXPENSES

Conservation Program Expense	223,923
Administration	16,939
Fundraising	19,645
Special Event	50,369
Total Expenses	310,876

Net Revenue	65,393
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* San Isabel Land Protection Trust does not include the value of conservation easements in its financial statements.

Reviewed financial information as of Dec. 31, 2017

EVERGREEN Giving Club

Evergreen Giving Club members give \$1,000 or more each year to San Isabel. These bold leaders make a profound difference in the work we do to protect working ranches, water and wildlife habitat today and for future generations. Make your mark by joining this special group of giving people.

San Isabel Legacy Society

With a planned charitable gift to San Isabel Land Protection Trust, you can play a part in preserving some of Colorado's most important lands and water for future generations, while also meeting your financial goals. Please let us know if you have already included San Isabel in your estate plans.





PO Box 124, Westcliffe, CO 81252

Join Us

To protect land,
water and wildlife
while there is still time

Become a member today! ... at SanIsabel.org

Photo by Greg Smith

Save the Dates

Saturday, June 1, 2019

Hardscrabble Mountain Trail Run

at Bear Basin Ranch

hardscrabblerun.com

Friday & Saturday, Sept. 27 & 28, 2019

Art for the Sangres

at A Painted View Ranch

artforthesangres.com