

# Land Life

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2027



**Palmer**  
LAND CONSERVANCY



*“Protecting, conserving,  
and stewarding land,  
nature, and water is  
ultimately a catalyst for  
community wellbeing,  
resiliency, and prosperity.”*

**REBECCA JEWETT**

President & CEO  
Palmer Land Conservancy

**Strategic Plan 2022-2027**

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# → Letter from the President & CEO

The novel coronavirus pandemic that started in 2020 changed everything. The magnitude of disruption, tragedy, and endurance required forced a paradigm shift for society, communities, and individuals. As I write this in 2022, the pandemic is not over. We are still learning, adapting, and bending under the burden of this “new normal.” At Palmer Land Conservancy we have taken Aisha S. Ahmad’s words to heart and have sought answers to questions such as: What is the future of conservation in light of the changes we see around us? What were our faulty assumptions about conservation and what are the bold new ideas that are needed to support people, nature, land, and water moving forward?

In its “Manifesto for a Healthy Recovery from Covid-19,” the World Health Organization draws clear links between a healthy environment and human health. In it, the WHO stresses the importance of protecting nature because, in its words, “it is the source of human health.” Protecting, conserving, and stewarding land, nature, and water is ultimately a catalyst for community wellbeing, resiliency, and prosperity. While I believe this statement is intuitive to those who are passionate about land conservation, I also believe that it is a bold idea that needs to be shouted from rooftops.

Throughout 2021, Palmer led Elevate the Peak, a community listening and visioning initiative with the goal of better understanding what matters to Coloradans of all ages, backgrounds, and identities as our region and world enters a period of unprecedented change. We heard from over 1,200 people from all corners of the community, including residents, public agencies, elected officials, nonprofit and community leaders, and industry experts. We conducted extensive public outreach that included roundtable discussions, interviews, and online surveys that brought together a broad spectrum of diverse voices.

What we heard is that we’re losing the race. Concerns abound about losing land in the face of population growth; drought, wildfire, flooding, and other natural disaster risks loom

large; the experience of being outdoors has diminished as infrastructure improvements lag. And yet, the natural beauty, proximity to nature, and the abundance of outdoor recreation opportunities is what people readily point to when asked what they love most about living in southern Colorado.

We hear these concerns loud and clear, and draw two conclusions from this feedback: 1) The work of land conservation has never been more important; and 2) Conservation cannot wait. We must act now.

You will find three overarching focal points within this strategic plan - people, health, nature. People ultimately make this work happen. The more that a community cares about its land and water resources, the more willpower there is to conserve them. Similarly, the more a community has access to the outdoors, the healthier it’s population is with a higher quality of life. We believe that connecting people to conservation and ensuring the benefits of this work is accessible to everyone in our community is a priority. Our work is guided by bringing nature to people and people to nature through increased opportunities for engagement with and connection to the outdoors.

This strategic plan is the boldest yet for Palmer. As we face challenges and pressures on land and water resources from myriad sources, we rely on a courageous and innovative mindset, robust toolbox, and an energized and passionate group of supporters, donors, and partners.

Over the next five years, Palmer Land Conservancy will use our people, tools, and partnerships, leveraging our role as a trusted practitioner with a 45 year track record, to conserve the core thing that draws us all to call this region home - the land.



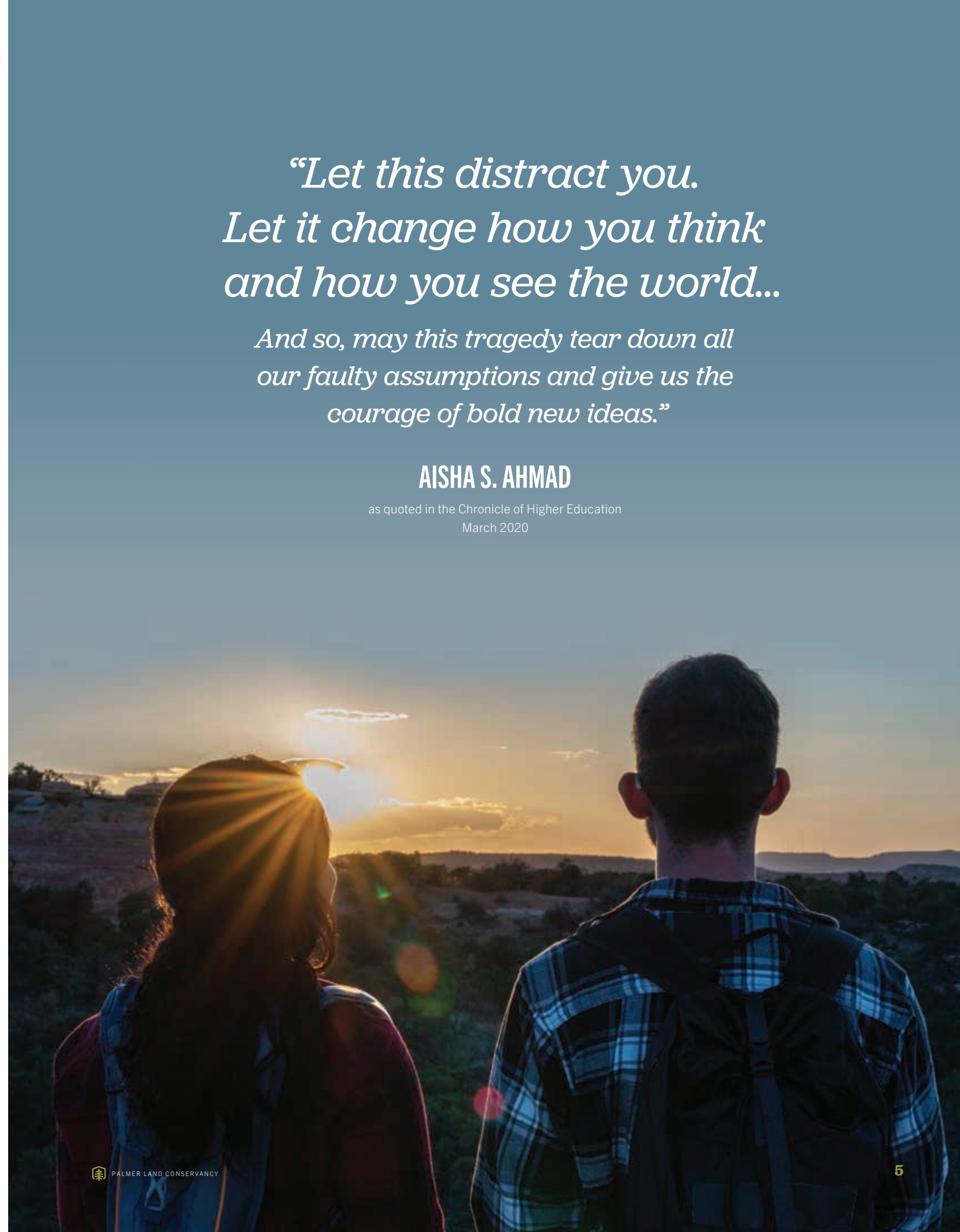
*Rebecca*  
**REBECCA JEWETT**  
President and CEO

*“Let this distract you.  
Let it change how you think  
and how you see the world...”*

*And so, may this tragedy tear down all  
our faulty assumptions and give us the  
courage of bold new ideas.”*

**AISHA S. AHMAD**

as quoted in the Chronicle of Higher Education  
March 2020







## OUR MISSION

**We are committed to protecting land and water for the wellbeing of nature and people.**



## OUR VISION

**We envision a future for southern Colorado...**

- ✈ where the health, recreation, and spiritual benefits of nature are available to everyone.
- ✈ where there is clean air and water, abundant wildlife, and ample opportunities to play outside, and daily inspiration from awe-inspiring views of mountains, rivers, and plains.
- ✈ where there is a vibrant and hopeful path for the next generation of Coloradans committed to local agriculture.
- ✈ where there is resiliency of both people and land through their mutual reliance and interconnectedness.
- ✈ where every day brings hope, inspiration, and a sense of being alive.
- ✈ where people feel pride for their home.





# A LEADER OF CONSERVATION IN COLORADO

SINCE  1977



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### 45 Years



CONSERVED OVER 100,000  
ACRES OF CRITICAL FARM &  
RANCHLAND ENSURING LOCAL  
FOOD PRODUCTION



PERMANENTLY CONSERVED  
OVER 137,000 ACRES OF LAND



PROTECTED 20 PUBLIC  
PARKS AND OPEN SPACES



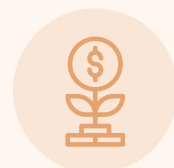
ACHIEVED AN ESTIMATED \$136  
MILLION IN ON-THE-GROUND  
CONSERVATION\*



PARTNERED WITH OVER 300  
PRIVATE & PUBLIC LANDOWNERS,  
FUNDERS, AND PARTNERS



LED A HISTORIC WATER  
INITIATIVE AIMED TO SOLVE  
THE WEST'S MOST PRESSING  
WATER ISSUES



FOR EVERY \$1 INVESTED IN  
CONSERVATION IN THE REGION,  
RETURNED \$12 OF ECOLOGICAL &  
ECONOMIC BENEFIT\*\*

\* Based on today's dollars and an average price per acre of \$1,000 in southern Colorado

\*\*Based on Colorado State University's "Investing in Colorado: Colorado's Return on Investment in Conservation Easements" 2017





# STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

2022-2027

## ➤ Health

It is imperative that we protect the health of people and nature. The pandemic of 2020 and beyond made abundantly clear the connection between public health—both mental and physical—and our natural environment. As the World Health Organization states, “nature is the source of human health.”

From clean air and water; to calm and respite; to exercise and physical challenge, our health is rooted in our ability to access nature and the outdoors. Our work is guided by conservation that contributes to the mental and physical health of people, as well as the resilience and sustainability of nature itself.

## ➤ Economic Vitality

The land supports our economy and quality of life by producing our food, drawing tourists with its awe-inspiring views and recreational abundance, and attracting industry and business. Colorado’s population growth over the last decade was nearly 15%, placing it among the highest in the nation. Within Colorado, El Paso County’s growth rate was over 17%, further

securing its position as the state’s most populous county. Many factors contribute to skyrocketing population growth, but high quality of life due to the proximity and abundance of natural resources and beauty is without question a primary driver. It is imperative that the connection between conservation and economic strength be recognized and amplified.

## ➤ Landscape Resiliency

We are living through an unprecedented time in experiencing extreme weather patterns that include prolonged drought, hotter and drier conditions resulting in historic wildfires, and severe storms resulting in devastating flooding. These disasters threaten our health, ecosystems, infrastructure,

and communities. As we continue to experience environmental changes, conservation is a tool to provide climate responsive solutions that can help mitigate the impacts and adapt to our changing climate, provide resiliency in the face of crisis, and protect our economic livelihoods and quality of life.



# How we make it happen

## OUR TOOLKIT



### Real Estate Transactions

We conserve land and water utilizing different real estate tools such as conservation easements, land ownership, trail easements, and covenants and deed restrictions.



### Subject Matter Expertise

We bring expertise in the fields of land transactions, legal frameworks, business and economics, public policy, and technical understanding to accomplish high impact conservation.



### Leadership & Partnerships

People and organizations power this work, and we take initiative to maximize expertise, time, and resources by partnering to achieve community goals.



### Funding & Leverage

We pursue innovative funding and financing mechanisms to achieve ambitious goals and leverage funds to achieve high impact on-the-ground conservation.



### Advocacy & Influence

We advocate and exercise influence for measures and policy solutions that advance the conservation of land, water, and wildlife.

## OUR VALUES

### Accessibility

We believe the benefits of land, nature, and conservation should be available and accessible to everyone.

### Collaborative Power

We believe in the power of individuals and communities working together to make a lasting impact for future generations.

### Connection

We believe in the power of human connection to the land and its role in public health.

### Courage

We believe it takes courage to lead and achieve meaningful results.

### Guardianship

We believe in the importance of trust and credibility in making and defending our long-term conservation commitments to land and water.

## OUR APPROACH

Our approach to land conservation guides our strategy, actions, and ultimately, our outcomes. We believe that in order to be successful our work must be:

### Local

We believe the most impactful conservation solutions start at the local level and are driven by community-expressed needs and desires.

### Market-Driven

We utilize innovative and market-driven solutions to solve conservation and community challenges.

### Nonpartisan

Land unites us all. Our work brings people together through a nonpartisan and mutual love of the land.

### Permanence

We believe in the importance of permanent conservation solutions for the benefit of current and future generations.

### Voluntary

We support private property and landowner rights, and provide voluntary conservation solutions for landowners.







# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Over the next 5 years, we will accomplish:

Acres of Land Conserved	200,000 <small>Acres</small>
Acres of Agricultural Land Conserved	150,000 <small>Acres</small>
Members Committed to Conservation	2,000 <small>Members</small>
Miles of Trails	50 <small>Miles</small>
Public Parks & Open Spaces Protected	25 <small>Public Properties</small>
Miles of Waterways Conserved	25 <small>Miles</small>

## Prioritizing the protection of:

- WORKING FARMS & RANCHES
- OPEN SPACES & TRAILS
- NATIVE PRAIRIE GRASSLANDS
- PUBLIC PARKS
- WATER
- WILDLIFE HABITAT







## LAND FOR PEOPLE

# Healthy cities, healthy towns, and healthy people

By 2050, the majority of our nation's population will live in urban areas, and within southern Colorado, Colorado Springs is expected to eclipse the size of Denver. To ensure the advancement of conservation in our region, conservation needs to be real and relevant for people in their daily lives. To ensure the well-being and health of our community and economy, we will increase our efforts to connect with diverse community groups and interests of our region; promote green spaces and access to nature for all in our urban centers; connect urban dwellers with local food, farmers, ranchers, and resources; and promote and provide opportunities for people to connect with the land and nature.

### GOAL #1

## Expand outdoor recreation and public open space opportunities for all people

We will increase the quantity of conserved open spaces and natural areas through additions of new public parks and open spaces, trail connectivity, and other efforts that bring people to nature, and nature to people.

### GOAL #2

## Promote, support, and celebrate land and water by connecting people to local food, the outdoors, and the benefits of nature

We will provide opportunities for people to connect to local agriculture and farming families, while increasing their understanding of food and water systems. We will showcase the benefits of nature and the outdoors through engaging outdoor experiences. We will bring the people to the land, and the land to the people through events, gatherings, and digital platforms.

### GOAL #3

## Advocate for the thoughtful growth of our cities and use of precious natural resources

We will help to ensure resilient communities by promoting the incorporation of conservation and green spaces in planning through government planning processes, advocating for funding programs that support conservation, and providing natural solutions that assist in the mitigation and adaptation of climate impacts.

## PRIORITY INITIATIVES

FRONT RANGE TRAIL

RING THE PEAK TRAIL

NEW PUBLIC OPEN SPACES  
IN THE PIKES PEAK REGION,  
FREMONT COUNTY, AND PUEBLO

PIKES PEAK REGION  
CONSERVATION PLAN

STATEWIDE, REGIONAL,  
AND LOCAL POLICY WORK

*"Preserving our natural wonders, as well as building and maintaining engaging city parks are of highest value to our community is fundamental to my fulfillment and desire to build a life here."*

SOUTHERN COLORADO RESIDENT







## LAND FOR FOOD

# Strong communities, strong economies, strong conservation

As the Front Range continues to grow at a rapid rate, we need to strengthen Colorado's working lands, rural communities, economies, and food supply. Effective conservation of land and water throughout the region depends on agriculture, land management, strong community capacity, alignment with economic development, and most importantly, community will. Conservation cannot take place in isolation from other activities. For conservation projects to succeed in the long-term, we need to work with rural communities to advance conservation actions, community development, land management, and sustainable agricultural planning, operations, and management.

## GOAL #1

### Increase the amount and accelerate the pace of permanent farm and ranchland conservation in southern Colorado

We will conserve working farms and ranches that contribute to regional conservation values and strong agricultural communities in order to ensure the viability and sustainability of communities in the Arkansas River basin and southeastern Colorado, the ecological integrity of the landscape, and the availability of locally grown food.

## GOAL #2

### Build community capacity and support community-driven initiatives that seek to advance local agriculture, ecological health, and economic development

We will provide expertise, facilitation, operational support, partnership, and investment to locally-driven initiatives and projects that seek to leverage conservation goals that further local agriculture, ecological health, and economic development. We will develop conservation tools and undertake actions as necessary to achieve desired outcomes. We will promote new models of conservation for replicability elsewhere in the state and region. We will prioritize projects promoting rural economic development that depends on—and, in turn, supports—intact, healthy land and water.

## GOAL #3

### Promote, advocate, support, and implement financial tools and frameworks that achieve conservation of working farms & ranches at scale

We will explore the viability and feasibility of implementing new financial tools, policies, incentives, funding programs, and ways to value conservation easements, in order to help landowners and communities achieve conservation of native prairie and working farms and ranches at scale.

## PRIORITY INITIATIVES

SOUTHEAST COLORADO FOCUS LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE

BESSEMER FARMLAND CONSERVATION PROJECT

PUEBLO'S FUEL AND IRON FOOD HALL AND URBAN FARM

CROWLEY COUNTY REVITALIZATION

CARBON MARKET FRAMEWORKS

ALTERNATIVE VALUATION OF CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

COLORADO CONSERVATION EASEMENT TAX CREDIT DEFENSE





## LAND FOR NATURE

### Keep it natural

Whether it's Pikes Peak, the mighty Arkansas River, or the rolling plains, our landscape is a beacon of inspiration for southern Colorado. Land, water, and nature stand at the intersection of health and prosperity in southern Colorado. Resilient, healthy, and conserved landscapes are critical to ensuring the health, vibrancy, and quality of life in our region.

#### GOAL #1

#### Increase the amount and accelerate the pace of permanently conserved land that supports biodiversity, wildlife habitat, waterways, and wetlands

We will proactively conserve priority landscapes that support important ecosystems, critical wildlife habitat, and watershed and forest health. Priority landscapes include those identified as significant today and those that rank high on metrics for resiliency in the face of drought, species loss, aridification, and other climate impacts.

#### PRIORITY INITIATIVES

PROTECT THE PEAK

SOUTHEAST COLORADO FOCUS  
LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE

SCENIC BYWAYS PROTECTION

PIKES PEAK CORRIDOR  
CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

LAND STEWARDSHIP SERVICES

#### GOAL #2

#### Preserve inspiring scenic views and iconic landscapes

We will conserve landscapes that contribute to scenic views important to the region. This includes lands along scenic byways or other roadways, lands contributing to a natural backdrop, and other parcels that provide inspiration or contribute to the region's natural beauty.

*"The natural world is not separate from us, but that's easy to forget when walled up. Being outdoors reminds me that I am part of everything else. It reminds me of my animal nature. Regular time outside improves all aspects of my well-being."*

SOUTHERN COLORADO RESIDENT

#### GOAL #3

#### Enhance the health of conserved lands and water

We will provide expertise, facilitation, and resources to public and private landowner partners of conserved landscapes to accomplish environmental, waterway, and landscape restoration projects, as well as provide assistance to private landowners involved in water rights issues or water-related projects with an emphasis on preserving agriculture water rights, improving water quality, enhancing wildlife habitat, and supporting other conservation values. Additionally, focus will be given to mitigating and/or restoring natural disaster impacts such as wildfire and flooding.





## WATER FOR LIFE

# The lifeblood of the West.

We recognize the pressure put on water supplies and increasing demands throughout the state—especially in the Arkansas River Basin. We also recognize the importance of competing needs of water including agricultural, municipal, environmental, and recreational uses. We seek to find solutions that balance these competing uses while supporting community needs and goals

### GOAL #1

## Develop and implement solutions that balance the competing needs of water in the West

We will undertake projects and create tools and frameworks that support win-win partnerships seeking to balance competing water uses and provide options for water supplies to support community needs such as local food production, habitat protection, environmental restoration, and recreational opportunities. This includes creating a viable water exchange framework that maintains the productivity and viability of farming communities facing past, present, or future water loss.

### PRIORITY INITIATIVES

BESSEMER FARMLAND CONSERVATION PROJECT

CB RANCH STEWARDSHIP AND CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

WATER FOR LIFE INITIATIVE







## ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

### A strong backbone structure is the cornerstone to success

Our ability to achieve desired outcomes for conservation is only as reliable as the strength and excellence of our internal structure—our people, our capacity, our resources, our tools. We recognize the value and importance of investing in our operating structure and seek to continually improve and excel in building and maintaining our supporting infrastructure.

#### GOAL #1

#### Steward the legacy – ensuring the promise of forever

We will ensure the perpetual protection, environmental management, and beneficial stewardship of lands under our conservation responsibility in partnership with our public and private landowner partners.

#### GOAL #2

#### Build the financial resources to ensure conservation doesn't get left behind

We will develop the financial resources and financial stability to advance land conservation priorities and ensure the perpetual protection of conservation commitments.

#### GOAL #3

#### We will support our people who in turn excel in their efforts to advance our mission

We will be led by a committed and dynamic group of individuals who work within an internal structure that ensures excellence, commitment, and responsibility.

## ➤ ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES

- Maintain accreditation status with the Land Trust Accreditation Commission and certification with the State of Colorado
- Complete the Land Stewardship Fund Campaign to support the perpetual obligations of our legal conservation agreements
- Create the Land Legal Defense Fund for the enforcement of our conservation obligations
- Experience a 5% or lower violation rate on conserved properties
- Lead the conservation industry with practices, professional growth, and benefits that support our greatest resource: our people





# » Thank You

Thank you for your courage to protect the places you love and for everything you do to ensure conservation in southern Colorado is robust and timely.

We are honored that you have entrusted Palmer to be the guardian of the land in southern Colorado through your financial support and investment in our organization.

We couldn't do this work without you.

When we look back in five, ten, and fifty years, may we feel proud to call southern Colorado home and know that together, we took bold and swift action to see our vision through to protect the land today and for future generations.





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