In our continued vision to amplify the importance of conservation by bringing the land to the people and people to the land, Palmer hosted more events in 2023 than in the history of our organization. Palmer members and our community play a pivotal role in conservation and, ultimately, make conservation happen. These gatherings not only strengthened the bonds within our community and the land but also served as a reminder of the profound impact we can have when we stand united around protecting the Colorado we love.

As we look ahead, I am inspired by the legacy we are building together. Your support has made a lasting mark on the conservation landscape. Our shared commitment will continue to shape a future where Colorado’s natural beauty is protected for generations. Thank you for being an essential part of Palmer’s conservation legacy.

Yours in conservation,

REBECCA JEWETT
President and CEO

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Thank You Members
Thank You Business Members
Leadership Team

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Now is the time to protect the land and water that define who we are as Coloradans

As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with gratitude and pride for all we accomplished together in pursuing our shared mission—to protect land and water for the well-being of nature and people. In 2023, Palmer Land Conservancy made significant strides in safeguarding our state’s natural beauty, thanks to the unwavering support of our community and dedicated donors like you. Your commitment has driven our success as we move closer to the goals within our most ambitious strategic plan, Land for Life, in Palmer’s 46-year history.

We kicked off the year by conserving a property within one of the fastest-growing regions in Colorado, northern El Paso County. This accomplishment is a testament to our collective dedication to preserving our state’s unique ecosystems amidst rapid urban expansion. Palmer also advanced critical regional projects of national significance with progress on balanced water conservation solutions throughout the Lower Arkansas Valley, including the Bessemer Farmland Conservation Project and the Las Animas Consolidated and Extension Water Sharing Program.

A cornerstone of the year was forming a multi-year partnership to protect 80,000 acres of Colorado Springs’ natural beauty while also ensuring our military’s security and resiliency. By recognizing the interconnectedness of our environment and national defense, the SOAR initiative exemplifies the impact we can achieve when communities come together with a shared vision.

In our continued vision to amplify the importance of conservation by bringing the land to the people and people to the land, Palmer hosted more events in 2023 than in the history of our organization. Palmer members and our community play a pivotal role in conservation and, ultimately, make conservation happen. These gatherings not only strengthened the bonds within our community and the land but also served as a reminder of the profound impact we can have when we stand united around protecting the Colorado we love.

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Yours in conservation,

REBECCA JEWETT
President and CEO

Cover Photo: Wesley Trimble, Palmer Land Conservancy
In December 2023, we welcomed five esteemed individuals to our board of trustees, each bringing a wealth of experience and dedication to advancing conservation efforts across Colorado. At the heart of Palmer’s mission lies the belief that people are conservation’s greatest resource. Their diverse skills, expertise, and passion for environmental stewardship will undoubtedly fortify our commitment to protecting Colorado’s natural beauty for future generations.

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Board of Trustees Update

With heartfelt gratitude, we honor Matthew Niznik for his dedication and remarkable leadership as the Chair of the Board of Trustees for the past two years. His commitment to Palmer’s mission is truly admirable and has left a lasting impact on the organization. As the baton is passed from one leader to the next, Palmer Land Conservancy welcomes John Geary as the new board chair. As the owner and president of GLM Development Co., he has also demonstrated a commitment to sustainable land and timber management. John is following in the footsteps of his uncle, Stu Dodge, who was Palmer’s first executive director. Stu Dodge, alongside countless volunteers, helped guide legacy conservation work in the Pikes Peak region. It is a well-known story that for all of Stu’s remarkable vision and energy put into conservation, Palmer paid him $1 per year as executive director.

Citizen of the West

The National Western Stock Show bestowed the esteemed Citizen of the West award upon Palmer Board Trustee General Ralph E. “Ed” Eberhart. This special recognition is a testament to his unwavering commitment to our country, embodying the very ideals of Western lifestyle, agricultural heritage, and pioneering traditions. General Eberhart’s journey is woven with valor and dedication. A retired four-star general and distinguished U.S. Air Force Academy graduate, he gained respect through his 36-year military service, which was marked by significant milestones. Notably, he oversaw the U.S. Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command during a pivotal era after the September 11 attacks.

As the 45th Citizen of the West, General Eberhart embodies courage, integrity, and pioneering spirit. We are thrilled to honor this remarkable individual whose life story echoes the values of Palmer Land Conservancy. General Eberhart and his wife Karen stand as beacons of inspiration, reminding us of the profound impact one person can have on their nation and community.
Heather Chaney Campbell Environmental Fellowship

Palmer Land Conservancy and the Heather Campbell Chaney Environmental Foundation proudly welcomed Tyler Yung as our Stewardship Environmental Fellow for the summer. Tyler, a student at Colorado College, brought valuable skills and a positive attitude to our team. He was selected as the recipient of the Heather Campbell Chaney Environmental Fellowship grant due to his strong commitment to environmental causes. Throughout the summer monitoring season, Tyler worked closely with Palmer’s stewardship team to evaluate the condition of conserved properties. Tyler’s acoustic band, the Porchbirds, even played tunes for the Bike the Bessemer lunch.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Taylor Shields

“I joined Palmer because I learned of the partnerships you have with government, private, and other non-profit groups and it seems like you all are efficient in your work. Supporting local farmers, preserving open spaces and their views, protecting water, and encouraging people to eat local are all priorities for me — so we align pretty well. Thanks for all your work!”

Taylor Shields
PALMER MEMBER SINCE 2023

Training the Next Generation of Land Stewards

Students from the environmental studies department at Colorado College joined our expert land team this year to learn on-the-ground land stewardship techniques. Organized by Theron Veron, Palmer’s Land Stewardship Manager, students helped remove invasive species like Mullen and Siberian Elm, thin over-populated Prickly Pear, and plant native seeds in disturbed soils at the Palmer-protected Rawles Open Space. Students also volunteered at Palmer events and helped compile important data for conservation research on solar energy projects.
Cultivating Community with Engaging Events

TENACITY: WOMEN IN CONSERVATION 2023

Whether in heels or boots, women know how to get the work of conservation done!

Women from all corners of Colorado gathered together to celebrate and learn from a panel of inspiring and knowledgeable women during Palmer’s wildly successful annual TENACITY: Women in Conservation event on March 15, 2023. These women shared their visions, hopes, and concerns for the future of Colorado while also discussing how they harnessed their strengths to rise to the top of their respective fields and overcome adversity. Their stories, insights, and pearls of wisdom were genuinely moving and inspired participants to learn—and do—more. The sold-out crowd laughed and cried, reminded of the power of women supporting each other.

OUR SPEAKERS
Anne Castle (left)  
Senior Fellow at the Getches-Wilkinson Center for Natural Resources, Energy, and the Environment at the University of Colorado Law School

Dawn DiPrince (center)  
Executive Director of History Colorado

Jackie Miller (right)  
Executive Director of Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)

2023 MAYORAL CANDIDATE FORUM FOR CONSERVATION

During the spring of 2023, the City of Colorado Springs was amidst an important mayoral race. To unite the community around conservation, water, and outdoor recreation, Palmer hosted a mayoral forum to hear the voices of prospective leaders about their views on these urgent and important topics. The turnout was remarkable, and the positive response from all involved made one thing clear—the land unites us all. Moderated by Alasyn Zimmerman of KOAA Channel 5 news, 11 of the 12 mayoral candidates joined for a robust discussion on the importance of protecting our natural resources.

CELEBRATING THE LAND SUMMER BBQ

Seventy Palmer members and their guests came together to celebrate their shared love for the land for a summer BBQ at the Double Eagle Ranch in Divide, a Palmer-protected property. Activities included hayrides, lawn games, live music from the Hickabees, and a delicious meal featuring local beef and a taste of yak from the PBJ Cattle Company. The Double Eagle Ranch is part of a 6,000-acre legacy conservation effort along Highway 24 between Woodland Park and Divide made possible by Palmer and a group of visionary landowners, donors, and partners who were committed to protecting agricultural, open space, and awe-inspiring views of Pikes Peak mountain, forever.

WOMEN IN ACTION FALL 2023

“People shape place, and places shape people.” - Leah Davis Witherow

Women from around Colorado gathered for Palmer’s Women in Action quarterly luncheon featuring guest speaker Leah Davis Witherow, the Curator of History at the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum.

Leah shared her profound enthusiasm and delight for the intricate history of our region with captivating stories about remarkable women and often overlooked communities. She explained the importance of topophilia—the emotional bond with one’s surroundings—and urged us to contemplate how studying the past can help us understand the present and shape our desired future.

BIKE THE BESSEMER 2023

Back by popular demand, Palmer hosted the third annual Pueblo farmland bike tour and farm-to-table lunch, which was the largest yet, attracting 150 cyclists. The educational and fun 12-mile cycling route featured century-old family-owned farms alongside the development growth of the region. The tour stopped at historic landmarks, including the Williams Seed Store, DiSanti Farms, and the Bessemer Irrigation Ditch, where participants heard stories from people who have lived and worked on the land for generations.

“...and so smooth for having so many participants. The pacing was great and filled the time in a not rushed way. The distance between stops was nice, and I appreciated hearing the personal stories from your partners. Having the bike support was key...The lunch presentation was the right length, and the food was absolutely amazing.”

- 2023 BIKE THE BESSEMER PARTICIPANT

“...and places shape people.” - Leah Davis Witherow

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A Once-in-a-Generation Conservation Opportunity for the Pikes Peak Region

Preserving Nature and Securing Military Operations

A Collaboration for Conservation

In a groundbreaking move towards preserving Colorado Springs’ natural beauty and military preparedness, The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, and Palmer Land Conservancy joined forces in 2023 and launched the Security, Open Space, and Agricultural Resiliency Initiative (SOAR). This multi-year endeavor aims to protect 80,000 acres of high-priority open spaces, wildlife habitat, and agricultural lands that are vital for military training areas across the Pikes Peak region.

First Phase Achievement

Under the SOAR Initiative’s banner, the partners recently celebrated their first significant achievement: the acquisition of 11,900 acres of the historic Bohart Ranch, a considerable portion of a vast 48,000-acre property. The Nature Conservancy and Trust for Public Land led the acquisition of Bohart Ranch, and Palmer provided technical assistance and project support.

The Bohart Ranch is home to diverse ecosystems, supporting over 200 plant species, 40 native mammal species, and numerous grassland bird species. This acquisition, covering nearly 19 square miles, marks the first phase of a multi-phase project to conserve the entire 75-square-mile ranch. This strategic move safeguards critical Air Force training areas, ensuring uninterrupted operations and pilot proficiency.

Beyond Conserved Acres

Crucially, the SOAR Initiative is not merely a conservation effort; it’s a testament to the power of collaboration. Public-private partnerships with the U.S. Department of Defense’s Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) program, the Defense Mission Task Force, Great Outdoors Colorado, and private foundations and corporations exemplify the shared commitment and benefit to preserving nature, bolstering military readiness, and ensuring a sustainable future for Colorado Springs.

“The SOAR project will bring tremendous value and benefits to the Colorado Springs community now and for future generations.”

REBECCA JEWETT, PRESIDENT AND CEO

PROTECTED FOREVER

Forest Lakes Conservation Area

We celebrated the permanent protection of Forest Lakes, a 189-acre open space in northwest El Paso County, one of the fastest-growing areas in the Pikes Peak region—if not the state. In northwest El Paso County, open spaces, nature, and critical wildlife habitats are dwindling. The property is located above an 867-acre residentially zoned complex, which will be the future site of 400 homes.

The conservation area offers stunning views of Pike National Forest and is easily visible from I-25. Forest Lakes is a natural habitat for wildlife and provides beautiful scenic views. Located approximately one mile from Pike National Forest, the property offers future potential opportunities for trail connections.

The Forest Lakes project highlights the crucial role of conservation in creating healthy and resilient communities. The protection of the Forest Lakes conservation area, previously slated to be the site of 61 homes, is a testament to the landowner’s conservation vision. The area will now be safeguarded forever, ensuring the well-being of people and nature amid growth and development.
Southeast Colorado Focused Landscape Initiative

As our five-year initiative funded by the Gates Family Foundation enters its fourth year, we’re proud to report that we’re making significant progress toward our goals. Our Southeast Colorado Focused Landscape Initiative focuses on sustainable conservation and community impact, and we’re achieving those objectives by taking a holistic approach beyond traditional conservation practices. By investing in people and communities, we’re not only strengthening the environment but also building more resilient communities that can thrive for generations to come.

2023 Lower Arkansas Valley Conservation Fund Projects:

**BOHART RANCH**

As the first phase of the Security, Open Space, and Agricultural Resiliency Initiative highlighted on page 10, the 48,000-acre property makes way for a once-in-a-generation, landscape-scale conservation project in southeastern Colorado.

**WILSON SOUTH RANCH CONSERVATION PROJECT**

The 17,570-acre Wilson South Ranch sits in the middle of The Nature Conservancy’s Southern High Plains Initiative’s (SHPI) Prairie Canyons Focus Area and protects shortgrass prairie, one of the most imperiled ecosystems in the world. The Wilson South Ranch provided the opportunity to work towards landscape scale conservation outcomes needed to maintain strong agricultural operations and sufficient open spaces for self-sustaining wildlife populations into the future. The conservation easement was completed in May of 2023 in partnership with Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust.

**DELHI RANCH CONSERVATION PROJECT**

The Delhi Ranch is a stunning 27,078-acre agricultural property owned and operated by Monk and Gary Hall—members of a multigenerational ranching family who have grazed the land for more than 100 years. The ranch spans three Colorado counties—Las Animas, Otero, and Pueblo—and is home to healthy grasslands and numerous imperiled bird and mammal species. Our partners Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust completed the conservation easement in 2023.

FIND LOCAL FOOD

Get Your Copy of Palmer’s Southern Colorado Local Food Guide

Download Palmer’s user-friendly, comprehensive guide to local producers throughout southern Colorado. From Salida to Rocky Ford, this guide is your one-stop shop to discover farmers, ranchers, and markets where you can shop directly for your favorite in-season produce and products. This unique guide is chock full of content, including maps, history, producer features, recipe spotlights, fun facts, and more.
Palmer has worked for nearly a decade to advance the Bessemer Farmland Conservation Project—a historic Western water initiative focused on finding win-win solutions to an impending dry-up of 5,000 acres of prime irrigated farmland in eastern Pueblo County. To chart a positive community outcome in the wake of this municipal purchase of agricultural water rights, Palmer has created a new model for water-sharing solutions and agricultural conservation—one that optimizes the use of limited water resources, allows for municipal growth, and safeguards Pueblo’s agricultural culture and economy.

Built with community partners and subject matter experts, the Bessemer Project is supported by a robust body of work. This includes a scenario-based Economic Impact Analysis that underscores the necessity to protect Pueblo’s agricultural heritage and community supported by two critical tools: a first-of-its-kind legal framework that allows for innovative conservation outcomes and a cutting-edge online Decision Support Tool for land and water managers to optimize water supplies and guide future investment into the local agricultural community.

Leveraging these tools and accomplishments, in 2023, Palmer focused and advanced three key areas of the Bessemer Project. This included moving into the “proof of concept” phase to pilot our ability to successfully exchange water between farms—a crucial next step in testing the feasibility of the legal and conservation framework that has been built to protect high-priority farms and water rights. We’ve mobilized significant funding and resources to accomplish this challenging task and are focused on finding willing partners, which has proved difficult due to the current real estate and financial markets.

Additionally, as part of our long-term strategy for success, we began leading a scalability assessment process in partnership with CDR Associates and community stakeholders to develop a stakeholder-informed roadmap for scaled impact. While proof of concept makes this project a reality, the scalability assessment will help project partners and the local community achieve its long-term goal of conserving a critical mass of irrigated farmland on the Bessemer Ditch. Lastly, after eighteen months of producing and planning, we finalized the strategy for a community mobilization campaign with a groundbreaking new documentary as the centerpiece of this effort that will launch in April 2024. Palmer believes there is nothing more powerful than storytelling and film when it comes to opening people’s eyes and hearts to an issue. We commissioned a world-renowned filmmaker to help us tell the story of the Pueblo farming community on “the Mesa” who we’ve been working alongside as part of our Bessemer Project. Produced by Palmer, MIRASOL, Looking at the Sun challenges us to protect agricultural communities like Pueblo, the lifeblood of our local food system, and to stand up for all the hardworking families and thriving farms on the fringes of cities that are so often taken for granted.

As the Bessemer Project continues to gain momentum, Palmer remains committed to finding win-win solutions that optimize the use of limited water resources and safeguard Pueblo’s agricultural culture and economy for future generations.

**BESSEMER FARMLAND CONSERVATION INITIATIVE INVESTORS**

Palmer has launched a community mobilization impact campaign to inspire and mobilize people and communities to shift their understanding, actions, and attitudes towards conservation. Two years in the making, this campaign centers around a documentary film directed by the award-winning director Ben Knight. The film showcases the value of Pueblo County’s farmlands and families and highlights the imminent threats they face from development, population growth, and water shortages in the Rocky Mountain West. The documentary film goes beyond agriculture and water to illuminate the intrinsic connection and universal human needs of food, family, love, and land. Join us in our effort to inspire and mobilize communities toward conservation.
Statement of Financial Position

CURRENT ASSETS

Cash & Cash Equivalents $2,562,926 $1,607,297
Accounts, Pledges & Grants Receivable $235,456 $270,543
Prepaid Expenses $111,689 $43,961
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS $2,910,071 $1,921,801
Investments 2 $4,816,772 $5,425,335
Property (Land) & Equipment $389,983 $389,983
TOTAL ASSETS $8,116,826 $7,737,119

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable $67,389 $33,118
Accrued Liabilities $115,574 $87,851
Deferred Revenue $1,487,540 $1,383,918
TOTAL LIABILITIES $1,670,503 $1,504,887

NET ASSETS

Net assets without donor restrictions $529,167 $411,156
Net assets without donor restrictions — Board designated $10,021,947 $14,487,318
Net assets with donor restrictions $895,209 $1,333,758
TOTAL NET ASSETS $1,648,323 $1,623,232
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS $18,116,826 $17,737,119

Statement of Activities

REVENUE

Investment Income net of fees $442,618 ($455,557)
Donations & Grants $1,192,746 $1,285,101
Program Contributions $595,250 $57,823
Special Events $72,185 $47,595
Other $7,687 $117,824
TOTAL REVENUE $2,310,486 $852,786

EXPENSES

Land Preservation $1,329,887 $844,535
Land Stewardship $252,729 $198,969
General and Administrative $219,919 $200,779
Outreach & Education $232,952 $166,742
Fundraising $60,908 $68,854
TOTAL EXPENSES $2,096,395 $1,479,879

FISCAL YEAR 2023

Uses of Funds $2,096,395

Land Preservation 63%
Land Stewardship 11%
General and Administrative 12%
Outreach and Education 11%
Fundraising 3%

FISCAL YEAR 2023

Sources of Funds $2,310,486

General Contributions 52%
Program Contributions 19%
Investment Income 5%
Events 3%
THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

Our generous donors make conservation happen. Beyond loving the vast beauty of Colorado, they courageously protect the Colorado good life—forever.

We are deeply grateful to our members, funders, and partners who are passionate about protecting the land. Thanks to your generosity, Palmer has been empowered to make significant strides in 2023, advancing conservation efforts in Colorado. We celebrate and thank you for participating in this incredible journey towards a better future.
Thank you to the following land-loving businesses who have joined Palmer as annual business members.

PIONEER LEVEL

TRAILBLAZER LEVEL

GUARDIAN LEVEL

Morgan Stanley

THE PIKES PEAK GROUP AT MORGAN STANLEY

FRIEND LEVEL

M & R | Mountain Equipment Roofers

SCHEELS | COLORADO SPRINGS

GEI Consultants

BUSINESS MEMBERS

IN-DK CONTRIBUTORS

Amy Triandfitlu
Ben Knight
Conservation Law, P.C.

DataStream Consulting
Holsinger Law, LLC

McGlothlin
Kristin McLain
James Joseph
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Cole Mika
Giri Nuth
Henry Harris Parker
Jim and Sally
Provenzano
Leigh Schnipr
Laura Spear

LEGACY DONORS
Campbell, R.J.
Chenery, Joyce
Clark, David
Conover, Gary
Cooper, Barry
and Patricia
Ellis, Don and Melissa
Foster, Ted
and Melissa
Freundenberg, Patti

Tony, White
Harwood, Dick
Hieronimus, Walt
and Katherine
Joyus, Debbie
and Mark
Kuckel, Benjamin

Lebel, Stephen and Cheryl
Lee, Jonathan
Peggy Begg
O’Connor, Barb
Slides, Richard
Wenham, Richard
and P.J.

DONOR-ADVISED FUNDS
We acknowledge Pikes Peak Community Foundation and the numerous donors who give through their donor-advised funds.

LEGEND
Thank you to the following land-loving business who have joined Palmer as annual business members.

IN-HONOR
In 2023, gifts were made in honor of the following individuals:

Dr. Michael Bartolo
Ken and Joy
Branam
Dave and Cheryl
Coneley
Benjamin Alan
Everett
Timothy Hannan
Darrell Harvey
James “Jim” Hunter
Dr. Beverly Johnson
Catherine Close
McGuire
Sandra Potter
Judith Rice-Jones
Shirley Wright

MEMORIALS
Jim Acker
Esther Lou Beynon
Harry and Johnnie
Cameron
Raymond and Helen
Colwell
Janet Conover
Nancy Brooks
Ekberg
Ward Hobart
Kathy Hybl
Pat McDaniell
Evettt Clay

20 Monroe recurring donor 1 Alumni Trustee Board Member

21
LEADERSHIP TEAM

PALMER LAND CONSERVANCY

VOICES OF COMMITMENT

Palmer Land Conservancy Members Share Their Stories

“Learning about Palmer Land Conservancy has been a great benefit. We have since attended the Bike the Bessemer event in Pueblo County twice. As individuals, we support the work that Palmer Land Conservancy is doing to try to conserve water and farming in Pueblo County and southeast Colorado. Without water, our farmlands would not be able to produce the bountiful crops that benefit us all. Without water and open space that farmland allows, our community would not provide the same living experience we all enjoy.”

Judy Barnard and Lee Newhard, Palmer members since 2023

“I'm feeling the growing pains in the Pikes Peak region and have concerns that we’re not doing enough to appreciate and preserve our open space, beauty, and resources. I cringe daily at the urban sprawl I see here in Colorado Springs and up and down the front range. As a Colorado native, Palmer's work is very important to me. With a solid track record of accomplishments, I believe Palmer will continue to take bold action to protect the land and natural resources.”

Tracy Sellars, Palmer member since 2010

Palmer Staff

EXECUTIVE TEAM

REBECCA JEWETT
President and Chief Executive Officer

KRISTIE NACKORD
Vice President, External Affairs

STAFF

AMANDA BRUNNERT
Operations Manager

STEPHEN HARRIS
Land Stewardship Director

JEFF JACKSON
Conservation Transactions Director

JEANINE MCCOLGAN
Finance Director

ASTRID MONAR
Membership and Events Manager

DILLON O’HARE
Senior Conservation Manager

CARRIE SUPINO
Community Engagement Coordinator

WESLEY TRIMBLE
Communications Manager

THERON Verna
Stewardship Manager

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CATHERINE STEELE
El Paso County

DONIS WALKER
El Paso County

Photo: Wesley Trimble, Palmer Land Conservancy

Member Stories

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