

San Miguel County Land Heritage Program

Heritage: Landscape, Wildlife, Agriculture, Stewardship, Lifestyle

Photo: Herndon Ranch beneath Lone Cone Mountain



What Is The Land Heritage Program?

- A private landowner wants to preserve his land and get some equity from it
- A party interested in land preservation steps in and purchases a conservation easement from the landowner
- The easement defines how the land is protected
- The landowner keeps their land (minus the development rights)
- The conservation easement binds the current and future owners
- The purchaser of the development rights retires them....they're gone.

Program Goals

- Protect open space and reward resource management
- Provide an alternative way for landowners to take equity out of their land
- Reduce estate taxes
- Encourage viable agriculture
- Encourage protection of wildlife habitat and riparian areas
- Protect the natural beauty so vital to the regional economy

How It Works in San Miguel County

- Voluntary
- Interested landowners provide sealed bids once a year or as advertised
- Bids are selected on “value”
 - Most bang for the buck
 - Degree to which additional criteria are met
- Landowner
 - Keeps their land
 - Implements a conservation easement with the land trust of their choice
 - Gets \$ from the County
 - County retires the development rights

Who Can Participate?

- Private landowners in the County with development rights to sell
- Land must be in one of the mapped areas
 - CDOW mapped wildlife area, CNHP natural areas, TNC Southern Rocky Mountains or Colorado Plateau Ecoregional Assessment Maps
 - County riparian maps (major tributaries of the San Miguel and Dolores Rivers)
 - Traditional agricultural lands of 100 acres or greater

Selection Criteria

- Land is on one of the previous maps
- Land is in San Miguel County
- Value (bang for the buck)
 - Competing with other landowners for limited funds
 - The purchase price can't exceed the appraised market value
 - The difference between the value of the conservation easement and the market value is considered a donation and is good for a tax deduction and Colorado tax credit

Selection Criteria continued

- Urgency
- Parcel size
- Buffers public or protected lands
- Commitment to agriculture
- Public access or public recreational opportunities
- Commitment to resource management best practices
- Protection of historic structures or archeological sites

Bids don't have to meet all of the criteria

Funding

- In 2000, the program had \$600,000 of which \$400,000 came from Great Outdoors Colorado, \$100,000 from the County and \$100,000 in private donations.
- In 2001, the voters passed a 1.5 mill levy that now provides approximately \$300,000 a year as program match money for the Land Heritage Program.

Funding Summary

- To date, 11,692 acres protected at a purchase price of \$6,692,273
- Source of the funding
 - \$3,784,756 - GOCO
 - \$2,336,404 – County open space & rec mill levy
 - \$1,336,530 from other sources including The Nature Conservancy and the Telluride Foundation
- Transactions cost - \$329,977.85
- Donated value of the transactions - \$11,488,454
- 22 projects, 11 landowners

Who Decides?

- A review committee composed of
 - Open Space Commission members
 - A representative of the County Commissioners
 - A member of the public
- Review committee makes selections based on applications from landowners and site visits
- County Commissioners sign off
- All applications kept in confidence
- Awarded applications become public

Results: Young Oak Hill Ranch

- 365 acres protected
- Development pressure
- Borders BLM
- Easement held by CCALT



Results: Herndon Ranch (Wire Pasture and Lone Cone Properties)



- 2084-acre donated easement, 59 development rights retired
- Visible from county roads
- Long common boundary with USFS
- The program paid the transactions cost of the executing the easement
- Gunnison Sage-grouse habitat
- Easement held by San Miguel Conservation Foundation

Results: Foley (Naturita Canyon)

- 240 acres protected in Naturita Canyon, 4 development rights retired
- Donated easement
- Creek bottom with 1.5 miles of intact riparian
- Bordered by BLM on two sides
- Easement held by The Nature Conservancy (TNC)



Results: Barrett Brothers (Hamilton Mesa)



- 1190 acres protected, 33 development rights retired
- Gunnison Sage-grouse brood habitat
- Headwaters of Hamilton Creek
- Easement held by CCALT

Results: Hamilton Land Partnership

(west side of Hamilton Mesa)



- 1054 acres
- 29 development rights retired
- Gunnison Sage-grouse mapped habitat
- Borders BLM, near Bray and Barrett easements
- Natural springs & seeps

Results: Robert & Melissa Bray

Hamilton Mesa Ranch



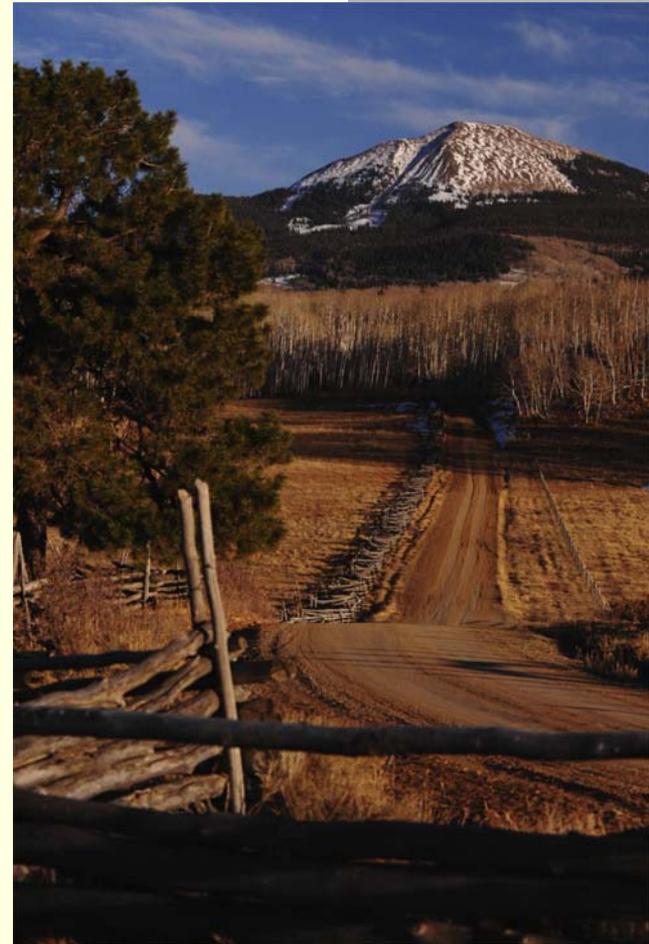
- 1,928 protected, 55 development rights retired
- Mapped Gunnison Sage-grouse habitat
- Seeps and springs
- Borders BLM, CDOW, and Barretts' conservation easement
- Easement held by CCALT

Results: Howard & Temi Hughes' Beaver Mesa Ranch



Hughes' Beaver Mesa Ranch

- 1790 acres, donated easement, 292 acres purchased easement: 57 development rights retired
- Includes irrigated meadows, water rights
- Mapped Gunnison Sage-grouse habitat
- Scenic views
- Undivided mineral estate
- Easement held by CCALT



Results: Starks' North Mountain Ranch

- 880 acres protected, 22 development rights retired
- Surrounded by public land
- Adjacent to the proposed McKenna Peak Wilderness Area
- Habitat for large deer and elk herd
- Views of La Sals, Abajos, La Platas, Sleeping Ute, Lone Cone, and Uncompahgre Plateau
- Easement to be held by CCALT



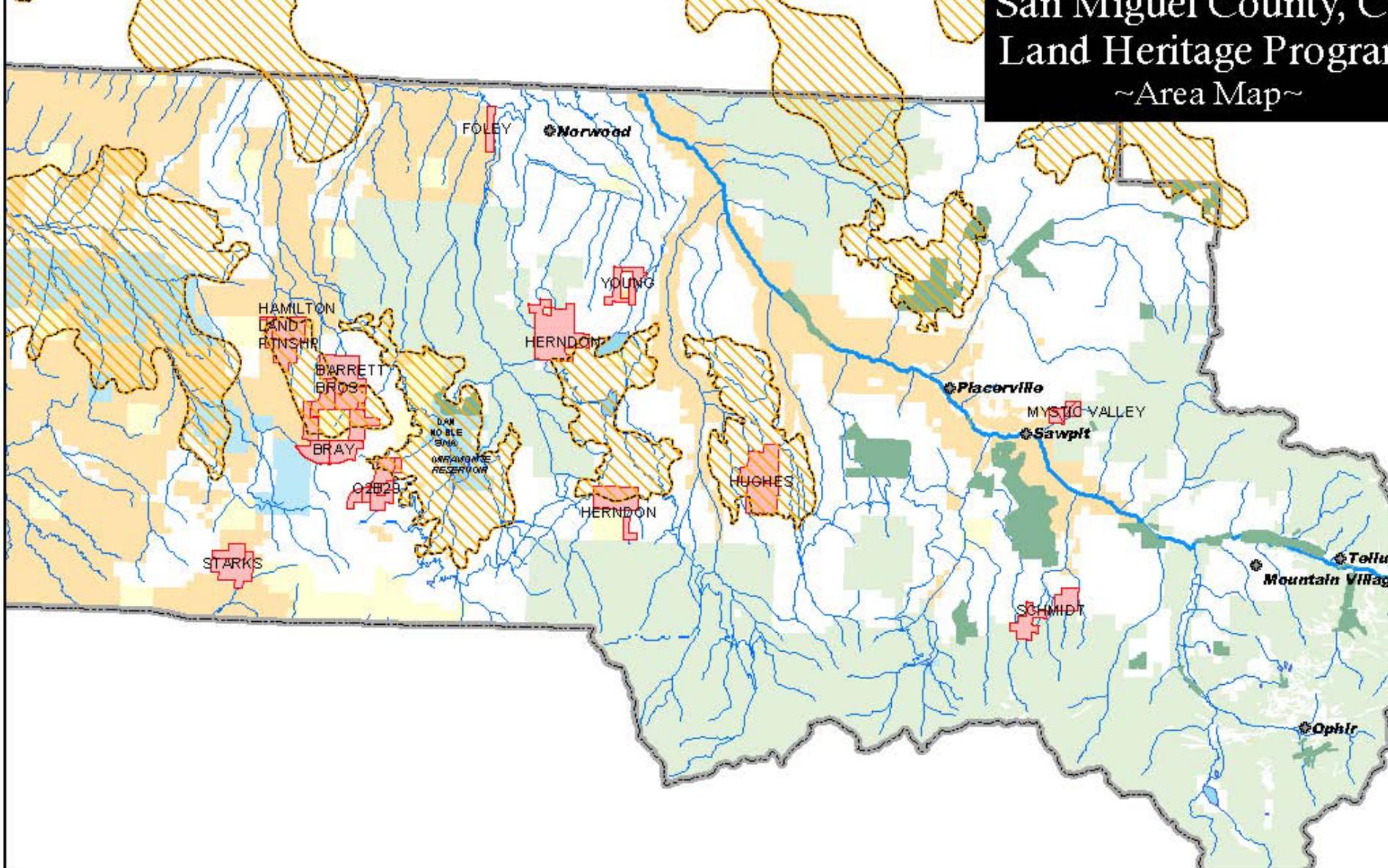
Unique Aspects of Program

- Easements are held by land trust of landowners choosing
 - The Nature Conservancy, San Miguel Land Conservation Foundation, Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust, Trust for Land Restoration, Rocky Mtn. Elk Foundation, etc.
- Criteria driven
 - Allows selection of the most worthy projects
 - Provides powerful incentive for responsible land stewardship
 - Less subjective

Administration

- County role is to catalyze conservation easements
 - County doesn't hold the easements
 - County doesn't write the easements
 - County is not signatory to the easements
 - County writes the GOCO grants
 - County administers the GOCO grants
 - County provides match funding
 - County facilitates and coordinates the closings

San Miguel County, CO Land Heritage Program ~Area Map~



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Legend

- Land Heritage Program Esmts
- Bureau of Land Management
- Other Conservation Easements
- Gunnison Sage Grouse Habitat
- Forest Service
- State Land Board
- Colorado Div of Wildlife
- Lakes
- Streams
- Towns



PREPARED BY: San Miguel County GIS Dept
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