



COLORADO OPEN LANDS LOR FOUNDATION

NEWS

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Contact: Wade Shelton, The Trust for Public Land, 720-810-7603; wade.shelton@tpl.org
Julie Mordecai, San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition, 719-580-0379; mordecai@gojade.org
Sarah Parmar, Colorado Open Lands, 303-988-2373; sparmar@coloradoopenlands.org
Laura Cardon, Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund, 303-226-4531; lcardon@goco.org
Jacob Caldwell, LOR Foundation, 575-224-1810, jake@lorfoundation.org.

Protection of the Rio Grande Healthy Living Park Complete!

The Trust for Public Land (TPL), the San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition (LFC), and Colorado Open Lands (COL) have completed the permanent acquisition and protection of the 38-acre Polston School property in Alamosa, Colorado as the site of the Rio Grande Healthy Living Park. The project was made possible thanks to \$700,000 from the LOR Foundation and \$254,000 from the Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund (GOCO).

“This project has been a true, six-year labor of love for so many,” said Jim Petterson, The Trust for Public Land’s Colorado State Director. “It took the hard work of committed community activists from the San Luis Valley, a state-wide land trust, a national conservation group, and two innovative funding partners to make this project -- a remarkable asset that is much more than a conventional park – a reality.”

The Property is now owned by LFC, with COL holding a conservation easement over the property ensuring the permanent protection of its land and water resources. A trail easement has been donated to the City of Alamosa, ensuring that the public trails on the property that connect to a trail system along the Rio Grande River are under common management, which connects the park with the Alamosa City Ranch and Cole Park across the river.

“The municipal government of Alamosa, on behalf of the citizens represented, could not be more grateful for the enormous gift awarded to the present and future generations of the Alamosa community,” said Major Josef. P. Lucero. “Our citizens are the true beneficiaries of this most benevolent gift. We will always be indebted to the vision, held in common, of agricultural importance, open space, and the natural progression of humanity in sustaining itself. Our thanks goes to the Rio Grande Healthy Living Park, TPL, LFC, COL, GOCO and LOR.”

“The Rio Grande Healthy Living Park provides Alamosa residents the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors in their own backyards, one of GOCO’s biggest priorities over the next five years. GOCO is excited for the park to reach this important milestone and looks forward to watching this incredible resource help get more families outside, particularly as a part of the San Luis Valley pilot community for our Inspire Initiative,” GOCO Executive Director Lise Aangeenbrug said.

The Trust for Public Land and the Local Foods Coalition with significant input from the Alamosa community have also completed a formal master planning process for the park. The master plan, which

will guide future development and use of the park, is now being finalized. The next step in the design, planning and construction process will be to complete a business plan for the park to ensure its long term sustainability, and raise the funds needed to begin installing additional park amenities and improvements. Both organizations will continue to work together on the project to ensure that the community's vision for the park comes to fruition.

"The Rio Grande Healthy Farm Park embodies what can happen when a community rallies to protect and enhance its character and way of life," said Jake Caldwell, Program Officer with the LOR Foundation. "LOR is proud to have worked with such a diverse group of partners in ensuring the community of Alamosa and surrounding communities in the San Luis Valley will have a treasure they can learn from and enjoy," concludes Caldwell.

Finally, to make the completion of the acquisition and to honor the community input from the master planning process, the Rio Grande Healthy Living Park will change its name to the **Rio Grande Farm Park**. A value that came through loud and clear in the planning process was to preserve the arable soil on the property. The new name accurately describes the park, which sits along the beautiful Rio Grande River, and its dedication to bringing the community together around a working farm, incubating farmers and growing sustainable organic food.

"After five years of visioning, community organizing, fundraising and planning we can truly celebrate," said Liza Marron, Executive Director of the San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition. "I am so thankful to the multitude of community members and partners that came together to preserve this amazing piece of agricultural and riparian land in the heart of the San Luis Valley."

"Colorado Open Lands is very proud to be able to support this remarkable team of community activists whose vision and determination have led to a model for community health and conservation," said Tony Caligiuri, Colorado Open Lands' Executive Director.

The Trust for Public Land's mission is to create parks and protect land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come. Millions of people live within a ten-minute walk of a Trust for Public Land park, garden, or natural area, and millions more visit these sites every year. To share your story or learn more, visit www.tpl.org.

The San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition works to foster an equitable local food system that restores the health of the people, community, economy and ecosystem.

Colorado Open Lands (COL) is a non-profit organization that exists to protect the treasure of Colorado's land and water resources. COL works primarily with private landowners to place voluntary agreements called conservation easements on their property; their ranch stays their ranch, their farm stays their farm. The process is driven by the wishes of the landowner with the goal of protecting open space, water, and wildlife habitat – forever.

The LOR Foundation works communities to enhance livability and quality of life. LOR partners with rural communities in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico to support their vision for livability – by protecting the landscapes they occupy and improving their access to nature, recreation, clean water, transportation options, cultural experiences and economic stability.

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) invests a portion of Colorado Lottery proceeds to help preserve and enhance the state's parks, trails, wildlife, rivers and open spaces. GOCO's independent board awards competitive grants to local governments and land trusts, and makes investments through Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Created by voters in 1992, GOCO has funded more than 3,500 projects in all 64 counties without any tax dollar support. The grants are funded by GOCO's share of Colorado Lottery revenues, which are divided between GOCO, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the Conservation Trust Fund and school construction.