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La Plata Open Space Conservancy Receives Grant to Remotely Monitor Conservation Properties in Southwest Colorado in Time of COVID

Remote technologies will help increase safety, efficiency and resiliency in conservation monitoring

Aug. 26, 2020 – Durango, CO – La Plata Open Space Conservancy, a leading land conservation organization in southwest Colorado, has received a grant enabling it to use remote technologies, such as satellite and aerial imagery, to monitor conservation properties as an alternative to in-person monitoring. [Keep It Colorado](#), a nonprofit coalition of conservation partners including La Plata Open Space Conservancy, awarded the grant. Keep It Colorado received investments of \$155,000 from [Great Outdoors Colorado \(GOCO\)](#)'s Resilient Communities program and the [Gates Family Foundation](#) and re-granted the funds to 12 land trusts across the state to facilitate a safer, more efficient monitoring approach in light of COVID-19. Monitoring traditionally takes place through in-person visits with landowners on properties.

La Plata Open Space Conservancy will use the funds to implement the remote monitoring approach on approximately 1/3 of its 176 conserved properties in Southwest Colorado. "Using satellite imagery allows us to capture a more complete picture of a conserved property, and even track things like vegetation density and vigor over time. We can easily "visit" remote areas of a property that might otherwise be difficult or time-consuming to reach," says Christy Curd, Stewardship Coordinator for the Conservancy.

The launch of Keep It Colorado's remote monitoring grant program is a direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has forced land trusts to rethink the way in which they steward conservation easements while keeping rural communities, landowners and staff safe. A survey of the coalition's members indicated that 80 percent of land trusts ranging in size and geographic service area reported that COVID-19 impacted monitoring practices, including concern from landowners about in-person monitoring.

La Plata Open Space Conservancy joined with its **Western Slope Conservation Partners** to obtain this grant. The Partners include **Crested Butte Land Trust** serving the Gunnison Valley, **La Plata Open Space Conservancy** serving southwest Colorado, **Montezuma Land Conservancy** serving southwest Colorado, and **Colorado West Land Trust** serving western Colorado

Land trusts are responsible for visiting their conservation easement properties every year. Visits involve evaluating the condition of the property to determine compliance with the terms of the - easement, and ensure that landowners are upholding the conservation values of each property. The [Land Trust Accreditation Commission](#) requires land trusts to monitor on the ground at least one out of five years.

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