

Teller Historic & Environmental Coalition

Five Years ...and Counting

November, 2005

Genesis of T.H.E. Coalition

The idea of a consortium to support non-profit groups dedicated to historic preservation and the environment in Teller County hatched in March of 2000.

Prime movers were Helen Dyer, Lucile Fehn and Kevin Tanski, with encouragement and backing from Michael Hannigan of the Pikes Peak Community Foundation.



The notion caught on with community leaders who met informally over the summer to sketch the outlines of an “umbrella” organization that would: “acquire, preserve and protect historic structures, parklands, recreational facilities and trails, and other historic, cultural, scenic, or environmental resources in Teller County and surrounding areas; preserve the natural environment and beauty of the area; educate the public regarding historic structures and the geographic, geologic and other environmental features unique to the

area; and provide assistance to other charitable or educational organizations in the area whose purposes were similar to the purposes served by T.H.E. Coalition.”

Those purposes were subsequently boiled down to the current mission statement:

.... to facilitate preservation of the historic, cultural, environmental, and scenic resources in and around Teller County, and to broaden public understanding regarding the significance of those resources.

The change in wording reflects a consensus, hammered out in planning sessions, that T.H.E. Coalition should in most instances be a *facilitator*, not a doer. Rather its primary purpose should be *to support its member organizations* rather than undertake projects of its own.

On October 21, 2000, the Coalition formally came into being. That first annual meeting was attended by representatives of 16 organizations who structured the Board of Directors and elected its first officers, drawn from the founding membership. Board members were chosen for their organizational links to: Historic Preservation, Parks, Trails, Scenic Resources, Environmental Education, and Land Trust. Additional slots were to be filled by 1) a member of the business community 2) an elected official 3) a representative of federal or state land management 4) two members of the community-at-large, for a total of eleven Board members. (Eventually, the federal/state slot became a second private sector or ‘business’ position.).

The unique feature of T.H.E. Coalition, and its greatest strength, is precisely that it brings together grassroots groups, non-profit organizations, businessmen and women, government officials, and concerned citizens. It is all too rare that groups with such different perspectives on the world focus on a common purpose.

First Steps

Much of the first year was devoted to organizational underpinnings --getting the Coalition onto solid legal footing and sorting out its goals and objectives. Thanks to financial and in-kind contributions by its early Board, T.H.E. was able to file Articles of Incorporation with the State of Colorado, obtain non-profit 501(c)3 status from the IRS, write up By Laws, create a logo, letterhead, and a brochure, and open a bank account. The Program Committee struggled to define criteria and guidelines for lending THE support to member organizations.

Before draft guidelines were off the press, T.H.E. responded to its first request for help -- from the **Two Mile High Club** of Cripple Creek. By availing itself of the Coalition's 501(c)3 status and technical assistance on grant-writing and budgets, the Club realized its long-time dream of commissioning a bronze sculpture to commemorate the town's gold-mining history and honor the role played by the donkeys whose offspring still roam the streets. "The Locals" -- as the sculpture of a jenny and her foal is known - has become a landmark and draws attention to the interpretive plaques that recount Cripple Creek's history prior to the advent of gaming.

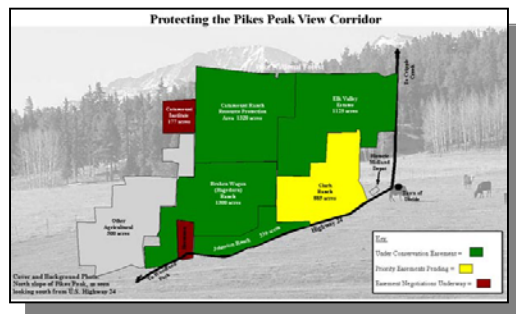


Hitting a Stride

Since that initial venture, the Coalition has joined in partnership with other member organizations to support a wide spectrum of projects

Scenic Resources and the Environment

On the environmental front, the main initiatives have come from the **Rural Land Preservation Group, the Palmer Land Trust, and the Teller County Division of Parks**. The three member organizations, with backing from T.H.E. Coalition, have collaborated to preserve three classic ranches along Hwy 24. Conservation easements on the Johnston Ranch, the Hermann Ranch, and the Clark Ranch complete the *Pikes Peak Conservation Corridor* and ensure that the picturesque landscape on the north slope of Pikes Peak will remain forever free of development. These ranches are the final pieces in the mosaic that encompasses 5,000 acres of ranchland, watershed, wildlife habitat, elk calving grounds and migration routes. In all, the collaborative effort garnered some 20 grants worth \$1.3 million, plus scores of private donations, to complete the Corridor.

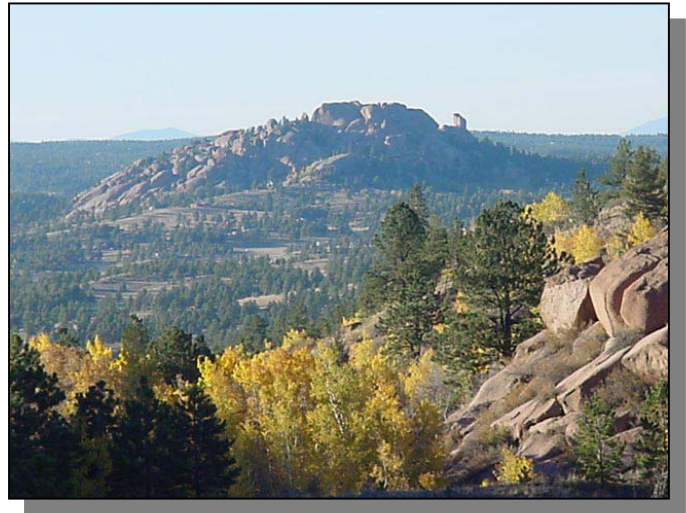


The ultimate measure of success, however, is not grant money. It is a dawning awareness in the community that the open lands and the rural character dear to the heart of Teller-ites are disappearing by the day and will be gone unless landowners and citizens team up to preserve them. To that end, the **Rural Land Preservation Group**, with support from T.H.E. and the Trails and Open Space Coalition, has hosted three Forums entitled "It's My Land, So Give Me My Options" where ranchers and others

interested in preserving their rural heritage can share experience and get objective advice from land trust attorneys, accountants, and tax credit specialists.

Coalition endorsement for grant applications and historic designation has helped other organizations preserve exceptional properties such as the historic Salt Works Ranch in Park County and the Stone Ranch on the Gold Belt Scenic Byway. T.H.E letters carry weight because of the Coalition's broad base of membership.

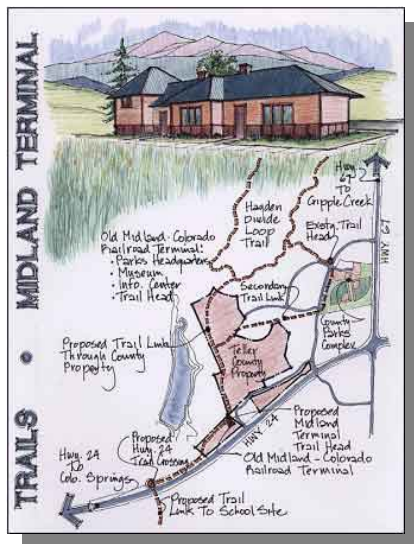
In 2005, the Coalition partnered with the Trust for Public Land to gauge the public's willingness to support dedicated public funding for land conservation in Teller County. A majority of the sample polled rated watersheds, water quality, wildlife, rural character, and recreation as 'very important', but fewer than half would raise their mill levy to protect the land that creates the character and sustains the water and wildlife.



Results of the poll helped spur T.H.E. to sharpen its focus on raising public awareness and explore financing options such as a voluntary 1% sales tax. Recent publicity on the Clark Ranch and the Pikes Peak Conservation Corridor have been effective in drawing attention to the value of the open spaces heretofore taken for granted, but a sustained effort is needed. Seed money from The Conservation Fund of Colorado Springs will help get the process started.

Honoring History

On the historic preservation front, the Coalition has worked with the **Ute Pass Historic Society** and the **Divide Chamber of Commerce**, as well as Pinnacle Design Works, on an ambitious plan to restore the Midland Railroad Depot in Divide...aka the "Whistle Stop Saloon". A grant from the State Historical Fund financed the first stages: Structural Assessment and a Master Plan that envisions a small museum and information and interpretive centers surrounded by a five-acre park to serve as a trailhead linking the American Discovery Trail with the Hayden-Divide Loop and providing visitor amenities. In the fall of 2005, after a decade in boarded-up obscurity, the plywood and the cobwebs came down and the Depot once again rocked to the sound of the DT's at a fundraiser to build the 'local match' to leverage grants.



To celebrate National Historic Preservation Month in May 2005, T.H.E supported a Workshop organized by Dee Breitenfeld of the **Ute Pass Historic Society** and the Teller County Historic Preservation Advisory Board. "*Mapping Teller's Treasures*" marked the first step toward an inventory or 'reconnaissance survey' of historic sites in the county. Coalition member, the **Pikes Peak Community Club**, provided meeting space.

Making the Means Fit the End

Annual Fundraisers have served the dual purpose of financing the Coalition's activities, and helping raise awareness of Colorado's rich natural and historic heritage and the urgent need to preserve it. Thanks are due to member organization, **Gold Camp Victorian Society**, which provided vintage entertainment for the first fundraiser; to John Fielder who twice shared his passion for conservation and his stunning photographs as well as proceeds from the sale of his books; and to the Aspen Mine

Center, PK Enterprises, the Woodland Park Public Library, and Java the Hut, all of which have generously provided venues, and to the Cripple Creek and Victor Mine for its support.

Still in the Hopper

While we've had some successes over these first five years, other projects have yet to get off the drawing board. The long-promised Resource Center has an ideal home in the Colorado Room of the Woodland Park Library but is not yet stocked and functional. The Web site has a domain name and a provisional Home Page but with the departure of webmaster Lee McDowell, the site has remained in limbo.

Most importantly, we need to connect with member organizations that have not yet benefited directly from support the Coalition has to offer, and to achieve the potential of the Newsletter and the grant-writing roundtables as channels of communication among Teller non-profits.

T.H.E. Membership

Non- Profit Organizations

Catamount Institute
 Coalition for the Upper South Platte *
 Divide Chamber of Commerce*
 Divide Park Board*
 Four Mile Farmers' Club
 Gold Belt Scenic Byway*
 Gold Camp Trails Coalition*
 Gold Camp Victorian Society*
 H-Bar-H Therapeutic Riding
 Palmer Land Trust*
 Pikes Peak Community Club
 Pikes Peak Historical Society*
 Rural Land Preservation Group*
 Teller County Trails Committee
 Two Mile High Club*
 Ute Pass Corridor Trails Committee*
 Ute Pass Historical Society*
 Victor Heritage Society *

Victor Penguins Hockey Club
 Western Folk Foundation

business/private sector

CC & V Mining Company*
 Sturman Industries

Public Sector

City of Cripple Creek - Park and Rec.
 Teller County Division of Parks*
 Teller-Park Conservation District

* denotes founding member

