

2006 ANNUAL REPORT

The Trust for Land Restoration

“Restoring the last worst places”

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The Trust for Land Restoration's mission is to heal the last worst places by restoring, conserving and protecting environmentally significant lands degraded by mining or other human activities.

“There can be no purpose more inspiring than to begin the age of restoration, reweaving the wondrous diversity of life that still surrounds us.”

—E.O. Wilson

Yankee Girl Mine Saved by Local Hero!

Montrose’s Mark Young Buys Threatened Mining Property

Conservation Easement with TLR Assures Permanent Protection

Stabilization of Historic Headframe Building Scheduled for 2007



Yankee Girl Mine as seen from US Highway 550 Scenic Overlook.

Governor Ritter says it's his favorite historical landmark in Colorado. It is perhaps the most iconic mining structure in the Red Mountain Mining District of the San Juan Mountains. Literally hundreds of thousands of people view it each year from the San Juan Skyway, otherwise known as US Highway 550. Locals say it is one of Ouray County's most important historical features, and until May of 2006, one of its most threatened.

It's the Yankee Girl Mine. The first, and for many years the most productive, mine in the world-famous Red Mountain Mining District, in the San Juan Mountains of southwest Colorado. All that remains today is a very weathered, very tall, very narrow, very old building that is much need to repair and stabilization. It contains what miners call the headframe, essentially a hoist built of heavy timber, sitting over the main shaft of the mine, used to lower and raise everything that went in or came out of the nearly 1,000 foot deep hole.

The Yankee Girl headframe building stands in the middle of the Red Mountain District, as one of the few remaining relics of the great mining boom of the late 1800s. It is in full view of Highway 550, Otto Mear's famed "Million Dollar Highway," today also known as the San Juan Skyway, a national scenic and historic byway. In fact, it is the building of principal interest, as seen from the improved Red Mountain Scenic Overlook. However, until the spring of 2006, this wonderful old structure was in grave danger of being torn down, the pawn in a game of real estate speculation. In 2005, "for sale" signs and bull- dozers warned that the Yankee Girl headframe was going to be torn down unless a buyer stepped up. Trust for Public Land and the US Forest Service briefly considered it, but deemed the asking price to be exorbitant.

In rides the hero! Mark Young of Montrose buys the property, announcing his goal is to restore the building, and keep the land from being developed into a homesite. Almost immediately he begins discussions with TLR to place a permanent conservation easement on the property, at the same time a team of locals, led by Ken Francis of Fort Lewis College/Durango, Bob Risch of the Red Mountain Task Force, and Tom Hillhouse at the Ouray County Historical Society, lobby for dollars for stabilization from the Colorado State Historical Fund.

The conservation easement with TLR was signed at a ceremony attended by several dozen interested citizens, on a beautiful September morning at the Red Mountain Scenic Overlook off Highway 550. State Historical Funds for stabilization were awarded, and work began summer of 2007 to protect what local building restoration specialist Chris George calls the "head and feet of the structure."

So who if Mark Young? He's an entrepreneur, helicopter pilot, businessman, search and rescue volunteer, and former Montrose County Coroner. He's also no stranger to the world of land trusts and conservation easements, having placed several properties in Montrose County under easement protection over the past 10 years. As with all of the easements TLR has accepted since our inception, not only did Mr. Young donate the easement, he also paid TLR's transaction costs and donated dollars to ensure TLR's perpetual stewardship. Mark's been humble when accepting the public's thanks for stepping up and saving an important historical landmark. All he says is "My wife and I saw a way we could help, and we thought 'why not'. We are thankful to be in a position in our lives where we can do this kind of thing."



Mark Young, Bob Risch and Chris George discuss stabilization inside the Yankee Girl headframe building.

Protected Sage Grouse Habitat on Iron Springs Mesa Grows to 760 Acres!

Chris and DeAnn Baker Add New Acreage Under Conservation Easement



Prime habitat for Gunnison sage grouse is now protected by conservation easement.

Once again, we are very happy to report that landowners Chris and DeAnn Baker have donated a conservation easement covering additional portions of their ranch on Iron Springs Mesa, in San Miguel County. This 2006 is now the third easement the Bakers have donated on their property, bringing total, and contiguous, protected acreage on the ranch to 760. Baker Ranch is in the heart of critical wildlife habitat for the Gunnison sage grouse. A once prolific rangeland species whose numbers have dwindled to less than 3,000, today biologists point to habitat fragmentation by road building, fencing, housing development, lack of predator control, and livestock overgrazing as the culprits responsible for the birds decline. Easement-required restrictions on Baker Ranch limit the subject acreage to no residential development, limited road building and maintenance, fences that discourage raptor perches, and a livestock grazing management plan that keeps cattle off during spring breeding season, and pulls cattle by early fall to maintain winter feed for the grouse.

TLR CONSERVATION EASEMENT TALLY

With the 2006 donations of conservation easements of the Yankee Girl Mine and Baker Easement #3, TLR now holds 11 conservation easements that altogether total 2725 acres. Combined, these easements protect important wildlife habitat, historic structures and scenic vistas enjoyed by the public. They reduce 79 potential residential development rights to 6.

A tally of TLR conservation easements as of December 31, 2006 looks like this:

<u>Easement name</u>	<u>Year donated</u>		<u>Location</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
Cimarron Ridge	2001	Cimarron Mtns.	Ouray County	1,000
Garard	2002	Ironton Park	Ouray County	150
Down Valley Park	2003	Placerville	San Miguel County	5
Fall Creek	2003	Wilson Mesa	San Miguel County	470
Baker Ranch I	2003	Iron Spgs Mesa	San Miguel County	160
Mystic Valley I	2004	Hastings Mesa	San Miguel County	110
Mystic Valley II	2004	Hastings Mesa	San Miguel County	110
Mystic Valley III	2004	Hastings Mesa	San Miguel County	110
Baker Ranch II	2005	Iron Spgs Mesa	San Miguel County	120
Yankee Girl Mine	2006	Red Mtn. Mining District	Ouray County	10
Baker Ranch III	2006	Iron Spings Mesa	San Miguel County	480

TLR Conservation Easements Now Protect Total of 2725 Acres in Ouray and San Miguel Counties!

Canyon Creek Brownfields Assessment Focuses on Camp Bird Mine 14-Level



1903 Camp Bird Mine Manager's Residence needs preservation.

TLR's 2005 Annual Report includes the story of how TLR conceived of an innovative approach to analyze mining impacts to Ouray County's Canyon Creek watershed, an area of visually stunning high country basins between the City of Ouray and the Town of Telluride. In 2006, the Canyon Creek Brownfields Assessment focused on two blocks of claims: the Upper Thistledown Mine (owned by Ouray County), and Camp Bird 14-Level (owned by Federal Resources Inc. of Salt Lake City). Our deepest thanks and appreciation go to both owners for their willing consent and cooperation to perform Phase II Environmental Assessment of their private properties.

The goal of the Phase II assessments was to determine environmental impacts that the properties may be contributing to, what the remedy to those impacts might be, and what the remedy would cost if it were to be undertaken, so that conservation interests would be able to devise strategies to cooperate with the landowners to bring their properties into some sort of cooperative, open space conservation protection.

The Canyon Creek Brownfields Assessment will conclude by June 30, 2007. Results and Final Report will be available for public viewing at the County Commissioners Offices at the Ouray County Courthouse, in Ouray.

The history of the Camp Bird Mine reads much like a classic textbook story from Colorado's rich mining history. Legend has it that surveyor Tom Walsh, after witnessing the devastating bust in mining prices that followed the great silver crash of 1893, wandered up to some abandoned silver workings in upper Imogene Basin, where he found gold-bearing telluride ore in a waste rock pile, mistakenly ignored by the now-gone silver miners. Walsh staked claim, and in 1896 began to develop new tunnels at 2-level and 3-level, below the original discovery. By 1898, 3-Level in Imogene Basin, included a three-story boarding house, workshops, and warehouses.

Tom Walsh sold the mine in 1902. His daughter, Evalyn, went on to become a famous Washington DC socialite, and owner of the Hope Diamond for nearly 40 years until her death in 1941¹.

At its peak, between 1902 and 1910, the Camp Bird was the second largest gold producer in the United States. A new mill was constructed at the confluence of Imogene and Sneffles Creek (the present day site of 14-level) in 1902, with a tram carrying ore from the portal at 3-level to the new mill. The still-existing residences were built opposite the new mill in 1903, as the site became a bustling company town. The new mill itself was rebuilt and expanded after an avalanche and fire destroyed the original mill structure in 1906². The new, 14-Level portal and tunnel was built in 1916 to intercept the workings above.

The next 60 years saw the Camp Bird Mine open and close numerous times. In the late 1950's, the mine underwent extensive rehabilitation, exploration and development. In 1960, the old 1906 mill was torn down and replaced by a new 500-ton-per day mill. In 1963, Federal Resources Corporation, operating under their subsidiary, Camp Bird Colorado, acquired it, and operated (or leased it for operation) periodically until 1986³.

According to Mindat.org, the Camp Bird “operated 1896 to 1990. Main ore body is the Camp Bird vein, with replacement ore bodies on three other veins. Produced about 1.5 million Troy ounces of gold to 1990. Also produced 4 million Troy ounces of silver”⁴.

Federal Resources is the current owner/operator of the Camp Bird Mine. They have an approved reclamation plan on file with the Colorado Division of Minerals and Geology for 14-level⁵, but as of the end of 2006 had made only partial progress toward completing the approved plan.

As will be discussed in the Phase II EA Report and in TLR's Project Final Report, 14-level presents a variety of environmental concerns and accompanying liability questions that complicate any potential public acquisition or alternative protection scenario.

¹ *Evalyn's Heart of Gold*, from *The Hope Diamond*. PBS website:
http://www.pbs.org/treasuresoftheworld/hope/hlevel_1/h6_heart.html

² George E. Moore, *Mines, Mountain Roads and Rocks*. Ouray County Historical Society, 2004, p.81.

³ *Ibid*, p 83.

⁴ *Mindat.org: Camp Bird Mine, Ouray, Sneffels District (Mount Sneffels District), Ouray Co., Colorado, USA* <http://www.mindat.org/loc-8702.html>

⁵ Bob Oswald, Colorado Division of Minerals and Geology, Durango Office. Personal Communication.

Summit County Reclaims Shoe Basin Mine!

TLR Helped Secure \$190,000 for Project



Shoe Basin Mine cleaned up by Summit County in 2006.

It's always great when "dirt gets moved". This is a complex business, made even more complicated by tricky questions of environmental liability. So it's always great to report an on-the-ground success. In 2006 Summit County completed the reclamation of the Shoe Basin Mine, east of Keystone Resort in the Peru Creek Basin. Shoe Basin was identified as a priority acquisition and reclamation project in the 2004 Peru Creek Basin Brownfields Assessment, of which TLR was pleased to be a contributor. In fact, TLR wrote the Brownfields Clean-up Proposal to the US EPA that landed \$190,000 for the Shoe Basin project. Summit County Open Space and Trails Department came up with the \$210,000 balance to complete the project, and they got it done. Good job, Summit County!

Down Valley Park Restoration Complete!

Credit San Miguel County Parks and Open Space Department for a Job Well Done



San Miguel County's restoration of a former gravel pit deemed a success.

Here's another project where dirt got moved, and TLR is pleased to have been an accessory to the good deed. Linda Luther, Director of Parks and Open Space for San Miguel County, contacted TLR in early 2002 to ask for help. After years of negotiation, the County had purchased a 20-acre property along the banks of the San Miguel River, twelve miles downstream of Telluride. The property, once a gravel pit, was to be turned into a new county park with mixed use: ball fields on one end, natural area pond, wetlands and riverside riparian area on the other. The County had applied for \$150,000 from the State of Colorado Resource Damage Funds to help restore the site. Now the State was asking for a third party to take a conservation easement to assure that the natural area would, indeed, be restored as planned, and remain as such... forever.

Then came the call to TLR. Could we structure and hold a conservation easement that would satisfy the State and San Miguel County? The answer was yes, and in 2003 the heavy equipment rolled, with great results. But restoration projects don't end when the tractors leave. Each site is different, but usually it takes years of stewardship, including weeding and watering, to make sure the new vegetation is established and healthy. At Down Valley Park, San Miguel County had the added task of monitoring and managing the recreational use of the restoration area. It hasn't been easy for San Miguel County staff, but this year they reached the point where TLR was pleased to be able to report to the County Commissioners and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment that the restoration is complete and is a success.



TLR site visit in the San Juan Mountains. Left to Right: Dave Folkes, Deb Willits, Pat Willits, David Scott, Wendy Folkes, Emmitt Hoy, Geoff Hoyl.

Trust for Land Restoration Support

2006 Donors and In-kind Supporters

American Geological Services

Chris and DeAnn Baker
Brownell Bailey

CD Conservation LLC
Robert Clark
Dave Folkes @ EnviroGroup Limited, Centennial CO

Jane Ellen Hamilton

Lofton Henderson

Geoffrey Hoyl
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Mark Young
Roy Young

2006 Contracts:

State of California
Ouray County
United States Forest Service

THANK YOU!