AGENDA ITEM or FINAL CONTRACT REVIEW SUBMITTAL FORM

AgendaTitle:
Crested Butte Land Trust; GOCO Letter of Support

Action Requested: Board of County Commissioners' Signature

Parties to the Agreement:

Term Begins: **Term Ends:** **Grant Contract #:**

Summary:
The Crested Butte Land Trust seeks to protect Parcel 1 of the Promontory Ranch, a 93-acre mountain meadow that contains a diversity of ecosystems and is blessed with abundant wetlands. It is also home to the unsecured Snodgrass trailhead, and thus has local and statewide significance.

Fiscal Impact:

Submitted by: B. Lucero **Submitter's Email Address:** Blucero@gunnisoncounty.org

Finance Review: ○ Required ◉ Not Required

Comments:

Reviewed by: Discharge Date:

County Attorney Review: ○ Required ◉ Not Required

Comments:

Reviewed by: Discharge Date: Certificate of Insurance Required

Yes ○ No ○

County Manager Review:

Comments:

Reviewed by: GUNCOUNTY1\mbirnie Discharge Date: 4/7/2014

○ Consent Agenda ◉ Regular Agenda ○ Worksession Time Allotted: 5

Agenda Date: 4/15/2014 Follow Up Agenda Date: n/a

Revised April 2013

April 4, 2014

Paula Swenson, Phil Chamberland, and Jonathan Houck
Gunnison County Commissioners
200 East Virginia Avenue
Gunnison, Colorado 81230

Dear Paula, Phil and Jonathan,

The Gunnison Valley depends on its rich natural resources and scenic beauty to provide a high quality of life for the residents who live here, and to draw visitors to support local businesses. The Crested Butte Land Trust's efforts help ensure the environmental and economic strength of the valley remains robust. I am herein requesting your individual support, as well as a letter of support from Gunnison County as it has land use authority over a property we have an opportunity to conserve.

The Crested Butte Land Trust seeks to protect Parcel 1 of the Promontory Ranch, a 93-acre mountain meadow that contains a diversity of ecosystems and is blessed with abundant wetlands. It is also home to the unsecured Snodgrass trailhead, and thus has local and statewide significance.

For more than thirty-five years, the community has worked to balance the Town of Mt. Crested Butte's interest in growth, the ski area's expansion plans, and recreationists who find solitude in the mature aspen forests of Snodgrass Mountain. ***The entire Promontory Ranch (comprised of four parcels) is now on the market for the first time in a decade, and conserving Parcel 1 truly represents an opportunity for land conservation to flourish without extinguishing any of these diverse community needs.***

Snodgrass Mountain entices thousands of nature enthusiasts each year. It boasts spectacular 360 degree views showcasing Mt. Crested Butte, Gothic Valley, the East River and Whetstone Mountain. It offers recreationists a year-round buffet from which they can choose to hike, mountain bike, ride horses, take photographs, snowshoe, or backcountry ski. It is home to lynx, black bear, and beavers; provides range for deer and elk; and is utilized by countless other animals that need the seclusion of this pristine landscape to thrive. It serves as a buffer to the Gothic natural area, home of one of the nation's oldest and most respected outdoor biological laboratories. And it serves as a welcome mat to residents and visitors of the Towns of Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte, beckoning them to slow down and appreciate our community's distinct beauty.

Protection of the property stands alone for its value to wildlife and habitat. The property hosts nine acres of wetlands, critically important in arid western Colorado not only for their role as nature's sponge, but because they ensure life for flora and fauna. Additionally, protection will offer a local

ranching family reprieve from continual fragmentation of their grazing lands by development. Gunnison County is, and can continue to be, a place where working ranches, and the food they provide, are highly valued. This sets us apart from virtually every other ski area in Colorado.

We've lost access to other public lands in Gunnison County because of past development, even though we've been assured that the right of use would be maintained. We know first-hand that even with the best of intentions, the transfer of ownership often does not equate to realized protection. So for conservationists, the icing on the cake in preserving this Ranch is the permanent protection of access via the Snodgrass trail, a single track used by over 40,000 recreationists annually. And for our municipalities, proximity of the trail to both towns is a key economic driver that provides quantifiable use-related spending and sales tax revenues.

In November, 2013, the ski area and the Promontory Ranch went under contract for sale – without even being on the market. On January 31, 2014, the contract fell through. The very next day, the Seller put the entire Ranch on the open market – not just locally, but with a large and successful brokerage firm that is marketing the Ranch to the entire western United States. The Land Trust knew it had to act quickly and tactically – as real estate sales in the Crested Butte area are up a significant 29% over the previous year.

This parcel will be purchased from the North Village Reserve, a subsidiary of the Crested Butte Mountain Resort. We're grateful that the Seller is conservation minded. An updated appraisal is being finalized and we expect the total project value will be near $2 million. ***If we don't act now, this opportunity will be lost - forever.*** The contract is structured as a bargain sale, meaning the landowner has generously included a donation so that conservation funds can be further leveraged. ***However, because of the marketability of the Ranch, the Seller has only given the Land Trust until mid-June to secure the funding.***

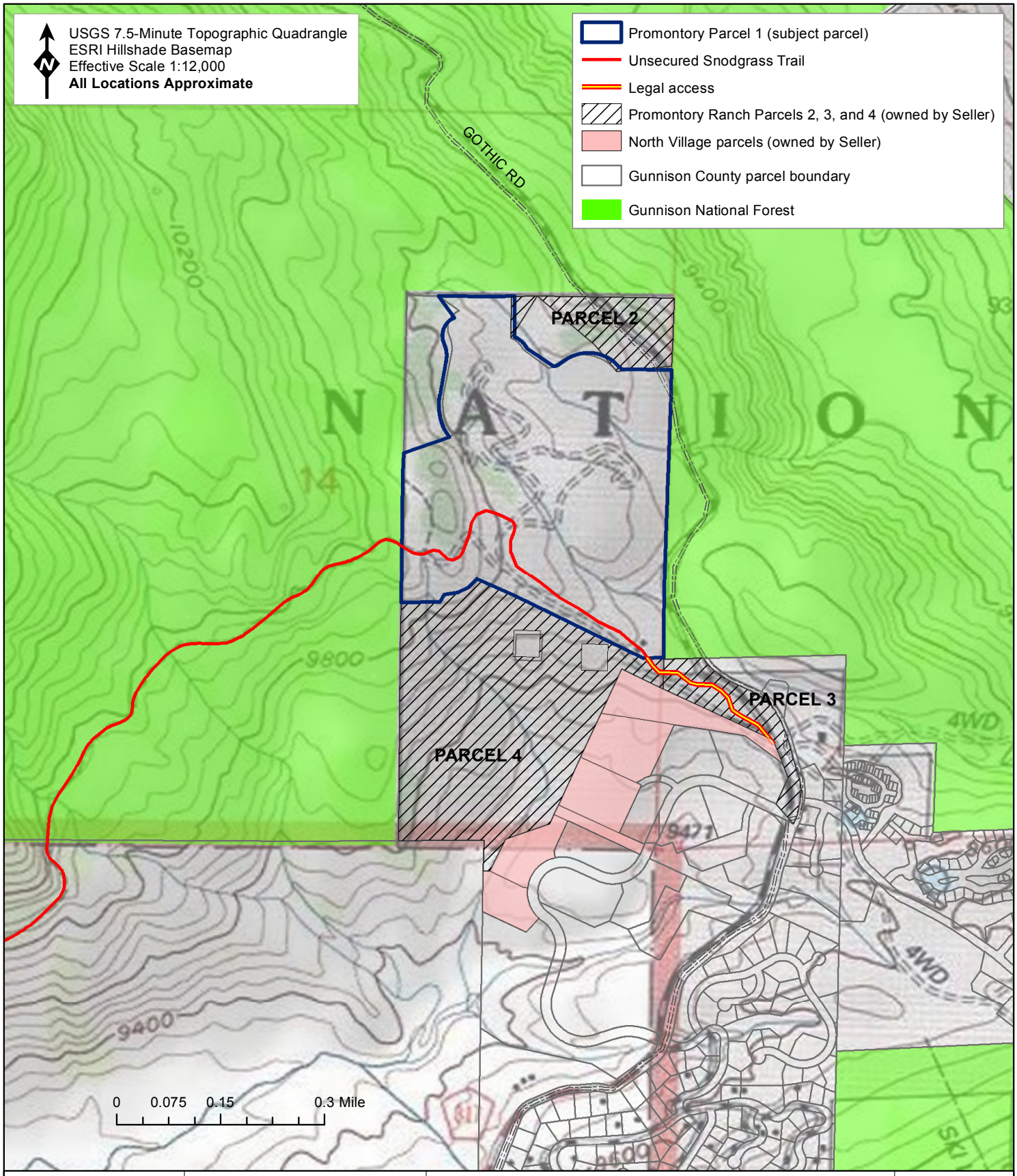
Support from the County Commissioners is absolutely critical – this landscape, and its connectivity to other conserved lands, and the Snodgrass trailhead, are irreplaceable. I have discussed this project informally with representatives from the Towns of Mt. Crested Butte and Crested Butte, and have pending meetings with both Councils. Initial informal conversations have been very supportive. We have also researched how best to structure this transaction. We have found that single phased-projects are more efficient and stretch precious conservation dollars farther than multi-phased projects that are completed in separate transactions over several years, since costs (legal, title, due diligence, etc.) with multi-phased project must be duplicated rather than completed just once. As well, multi-phased projects often require leases and multiple changes of ownership, further expending public funding.

This project is of utmost importance to our towns, our community and our visitors. Thank you in advance for your consideration of support to protect this worthy county amenity.

Most sincerely,

ann Johnston

Ann Johnston
Executive Director



DATE: March 2014

DRAWN BY: D. Reeder

RARE EARTH SCIENCE
PO Box 1245
Paonia, Colorado 81428
(970) 527-8445
dawn@rareearthscience.com

TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

PROMONTORY PROPERTY
PROPOSED CONSERVATION ACQUISITION
Gunnison County, Colorado

FIGURE 2

Gunnison County
COLORADO

Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners
Phone: (970) 641–0248 • Fax: (970) 641–3061
Email: bocc@gunnisoncounty.org • www.GunnisonCounty.org

April 15, 2013

Mr. Josh Tenneson
Open Space Program Director
Great Outdoors Colorado
303 East 17th Avenue, Suite 1060
Denver, Colorado 80203

RE: Crested Butte Land Trust's Promontory Ranch Application

Dear Josh and the Board of Directors of Great Outdoors Colorado,

The Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners strongly supports the Crested Butte Land Trust's grant application to protect Parcel 1 of the Promontory Ranch, on the eastern flank of Snodgrass Mountain. Conservation of scenic views and wildlife habitat, providing opportunities for recreation, and maintaining historic grazing patterns are all high priorities for the Gunnison County community.

It is notable that in 2013, the Board of County Commissioners requested that the Gunnison County Trails Commission develop a list of access concerns in Gunnison County. These concerns were established with input from various stakeholders including the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, stock growers and the public. The Snodgrass Trail was specifically listed as a priority.

The opportunity for this project to realize numerous conservation goals, while meeting various needs of the community, is tremendous. We thank you for the support you have given the Crested Butte Land Trust, and thus Gunnison Valley, in the past, and respectfully request your support of this application.

Sincerely,

Paula Swenson, Chairperson | Phil Chamberland, Commissioner | Jonathan Houck, Commissioner