AGENDA ITEM or FINAL CONTRACT REVIEW SUBMITTAL FORM

AgendaTitle:
Request for Letter of Support; Great Outdoors Colorado Grant Application; Colorado Open Lands; Little Cimarron Farm; $300,000

Action Requested: Board of County Commissioners' Signature

Parties to the Agreement:

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

Summary:
See attached documents and information.

Fiscal Impact: $300,000

Submitted by: Katherine Haase for CO Open Lands **Submitter's Email Address:** khaase@gunnisoncounty.org

Finance Review: (●) Required ( ) Not Required

Comments:

Fiscal impact listed above does not include any County dollars. They are seeking a letter of support only at this time.

Reviewed by: Lnienhueser Discharge Date: 7/24/2013

County Attorney Review: (●) Required ( ) Not Required

Comments:

Reviewed by: ATrezise Discharge Date: 7/24/2013 Certificate of Insurance Required Yes ( ) No (●)

County Manager Review:

Comments:

Reviewed by: MBirnie Discharge Date: 7/29/2013

( ) Consent Agenda (●) Regular Agenda ( ) Worksession Time Allotted: 5 minutes

Agenda Date: 8/6/2013 Follow Up Agenda Date: N/A

Revised April 2013

Katherine Haase

From: Dieter Erdmann <derdmann@westernrivers.org>
Sent: Tuesday, July 23, 2013 1:54 PM
To: BOCC
Cc: Amanda Nims
Subject: request for letter of support
Attachments: draft Gunnison County COL GOCO support letter.docx; Little Cimarron Project Information Sheet 0713.pdf

Hi Katherine,

Thanks again for getting back to me last week regarding a request from Colorado Open Lands for a letter of support for their application to Great Outdoors Colorado. I'm a day late in getting this information to you and I hope that doesn't preempt the request from being considered at the Commissioners 8/6 meeting.

Attached please find information regarding the project as well as an example of a brief support letter for the proposal. Colorado Open Lands, the land trust that will hold the conservation easement, is seeking $300,000 from Great Outdoors Colorado for this project. GOCO requires that the grantee engage the Board of Commissioners of any County where a request is made. I'm assisting Colorado Open Lands in securing request letters as their staffer for the project is on summer vacation.

About 190 acres of the 220-acre property to be protected by conservation is located within Gunnison County. This property is owned by Western Rivers Conservancy under parcel numbers 3987-263-00-043 and 030. I can provide more specific mapping information if that is helpful.

Colorado Open Lands application to GOCO is due on 8/15. Please let me know whether you anticipate any problems with this request or whether you have any questions regarding the attached.

Thank you,

Dieter

Dieter Erdmann | Interior West Program Director
Western Rivers Conservancy | Interior West Program
1228 15th St, Suite 316 | Denver, CO 80202
Office: 303-645-4953 | Mobile: 303-638-9465 | www.westernrivers.org

Sometimes to save a river, you have to buy it.

WESTERN RIVERS CONSERVANCY

August 6, 2013

Lise Aangeenbrug
Executive Director
Great Outdoors Colorado
303 E 17th Ave., Suite 1060
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Ms. Aangeenbrug,

The Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners supports Colorado Open Lands' application to the Great Outdoors Colorado Open Space program for funding in the amount of $300,000 to purchase a conservation easement protecting the 220-acre Little Cimarron Farm. This property, currently owned by Western Rivers Conservancy, is located in the Little Cimarron Valley in western Gunnison County and eastern Montrose County.

Gunnison County's citizens cherish their sense of community and place, as evidenced by the 2012 reauthorization of the Gunnison Valley Land Preservation Fund, a sales tax renewal that was approved by 81% of the County's voting citizens. Gunnison County government strives to preserve and promote the well-being of the County's natural environment and rural character, and to deliver services and set standards that reflect our values and preserve our unique quality of life for present and future generations to enjoy.

Agriculture and recreational tourism are two fundamental elements of Gunnison County's economy. We understand that the goal of this project is to maintain and protect the agricultural productivity of the Little Cimarron Farm, while providing in-stream flows to benefit fisheries and aquatic habitat in the Little Cimarron River during certain portions of the irrigation season. This appears to be a balanced, non-regulatory strategy to meet competing resource needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal.

Sincerely,

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

cc: Amanda Nims, Land Protection Specialist; Colorado Open Lands; 274 Union Blvd, Suite 320, Lakewood, CO 80228

DRAFT

Little Cimarron River

Western Rivers Conservancy

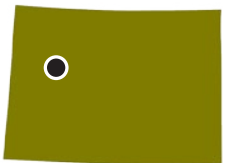
Re-watering a key tributary of Colorado's Gunnison River

A project of Western Rivers Conservancy, Colorado Water Trust and Colorado Open Lands

7.13

The Little Cimarron River is one of the jewels of Colorado's West Slope. It tumbles from the Uncompahgre Wilderness, bound for the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, 33 miles to the north.

For the first 13 miles, the Little Cimarron has all the qualities of a wild trout stream, its waters cold and clear and teeming with naturally reproducing rainbow and brook trout. Once the river reaches the irrigation ditches of the lower valley, though, it is sometimes alternately dried up, re-watered and dried up again by irrigation diversions from mid-July to September. This is the fate of many such streams in the Rockies, as uses compete for a limited resource. But irrigated agricultural production and maintenance of aquatic habitat do not have to be mutually exclusive.



Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) has partnered with Colorado Water Trust (CWT) and Colorado Open Lands (COL) and acquired a farm that will allow us to place water in-stream and ensure perennial flows where today the Little Cimarron runs dry. To that end, WRC purchased a 220-acre farm with 5.76 cubic feet per second of senior water rights on the Little Cimarron River.

By acquiring a farm with abundant water rights, WRC has effectively gained control of a lifeline for the Little Cimarron. We are now working with COL and CWT to attempt an unprecedented split-season irrigation approach that will benefit both the Little Cimarron and local agriculture. If successful, the system will keep water in the Little Cimarron during the driest months of the year while allowing for irrigation when the river has average or above-average flows.

This project will attempt to restore perennial flows in the Little Cimarron all the way to the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, allowing native fishes to re-colonize a former part of their range. The agricultural productivity of the land will be protected with a conservation easement and the water will be dedicated in-stream during the dry summer months, when it is needed most.

COLORADO WATER TRUST

Currently, the lower Little Cimarron is de-watered much of the year. Western Rivers Conservancy is purchasing senior water rights and working with Colorado Water Trust to dedicate them to in-stream use. This acquisition will permanently ensure the river flows year-round and will enhance its status as a prized trout stream.

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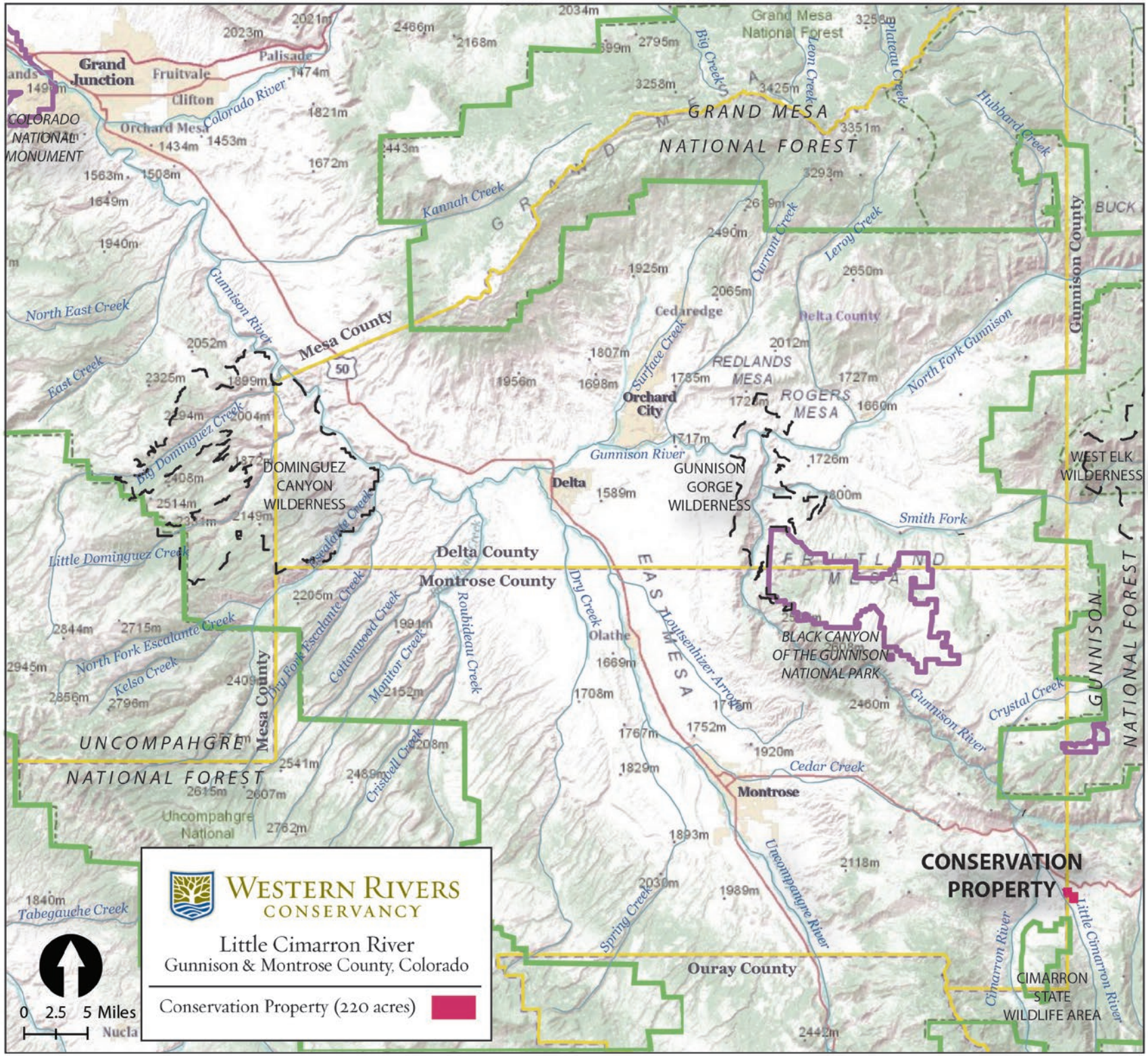
For more information, please contact:

Dieter Erdmann, Interior West Program Director

Western Rivers Conservancy

303-645-4953 | derdmann@westernrivers.org


WESTERN RIVERS CONSERVANCY
Little Cimarron River
Gunnison & Montrose County, Colorado
Conservation Property (220 acres)
0 2.5 5 Miles
CONSERVATION PROPERTY
GRAND MESA NATIONAL FOREST
UNCOMPAHGRE NATIONAL FOREST
GUNNISON NATIONAL FOREST
COLORADO NATIONAL MONUMENT
BLACK CANYON OF THE GUNNISON NATIONAL PARK
DOMINGUEZ CANYON WILDERNESS
GUNNISON GORGE WILDERNESS
WEST ELK WILDERNESS
CIMARRON STATE WILDLIFE AREA
Grand Junction
Fruitvale
Palisade
Clifton
Orchard Mesa
Cedaredge
Orchard City
Delta
Olathe
Montrose
Mesa County
Delta County
Montrose County
Ouray County
Gunnison County
REDLANDS MESA
ROGERS MESA
EAST MESA
Grand Mesa National Forest
Uncompahgre National
Colorado River
Gunnison River
Uncompahgre River
Little Cimarron River
Cimarron River
Crystal Creek
Smith Fork
North Fork Gunnison
Cedar Creek
Dry Creek
Roubideau Creek
Cottonwood Creek
Monitor Creek
Cristwell Creek
Spring Creek
Little Dominguez Creek
Big Dominguez Creek
North Fork Escalante Creek
Dry Fork Escalante Creek
Kelso Creek
Tabeguache Creek
North East Creek
East Creek
Kannah Creek
Big Creek
Leon Creek
Plateau Creek
Hubbard Creek
Currant Creek
Leroy Creek
Surface Creek
Loutsenhizer Arroyo
Nucla