



ASPEN VALLEY LAND TRUST

April 2004

Spring—already! The snow is quickly melting and a new season begins. For us at AVLT it means our favorite part of the job—field trips! This is when we get to look at potential new easements and meet landowners who are interested in conserving their properties.

Statistics:

April 1, 2004: **9,230 acres** under easement or ownership

AVLT's conserved acreage has actually decreased with the transfer of the Independence townsite to the ownership of the U.S. Forest Service. It's good to know that it will be managed as public lands.

Preservation at Happy Day Ranch and Redstone

In the first quarter, two easements have been closed with AVLT, and both are interesting and special places:

- **Happy Day Ranch:** Ginny Parker and her family have owned Happy Day Ranch for 50 years. The ranch is located in Emma and is most noted for its charming Victorian homestead and sweeping hillside meadows. Just days before her mother's death at age 99, Ginny donated a conservation easement on a 25-acre parcel in memory of her daughter, Nancy Parker West.
- **Redstone Coke Ovens:** In a cooperative deal involving AVLT, the Redstone Historic Society, Pitkin County Open Space and Trails and the Colorado Historical Fund, the Redstone Coke Ovens and 14 surrounding acres were placed under a conservation easement and the property was transferred to Pitkin County ownership. The coke ovens are not only adjacent to the West Elk Scenic Byway, they are an important part of the community's history and serve as the entrance to the town.

Preserving Carbondale's East Mesa

AVLT is poised to purchase its first conservation easement on the John Nieslanik Ranch on the East Mesa in June. The East Mesa is a broad swath of over 3,000 acres of productive agricultural land stretching above Carbondale to the public lands surrounding Mount Sopris. While the East Mesa is divided into multiple ownerships, the fate of the Mesa must be addressed as a whole. Because of the geographic layout, development on one parcel will dramatically impact the other properties and most likely trigger a domino effect of development.

Conversely, the successful conservation of one ranch will hopefully be the catalyst for conservation across the entire East Mesa. Most of the landowners on the Mesa agree that there should not be large scale development on these properties and are interested in pursuing the conservation of their ranches. However, one landowner needs to lead the way and the John Nieslanik family has agreed to take this generous step.

The John Nieslanik Ranch conservation easement will protect over 180 acres of prime agricultural land and wildlife habitat. The Nieslaniks are donating one third of the value of their easement and AVLT will raise the remaining money needed to purchase this valuable conservation easement. Our fundraising campaign has been extremely successful and AVLT has received grants from the Department of Agriculture, Great Outdoors Colorado and the Colorado Conservation Trust for \$750,000 and the remaining \$250,000 has been pledged! We anticipate closing on this easement in June and then hope to begin working with other interested landowners on the Mesa. In order to continue this trend of conservation across the Mesa, AVLT's goal is to raise \$100,000 in community contributions this spring. *This will demonstrate community support for the project and show granting agencies that we have matching funds available.*

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Dave Bellack joins the board of Aspen Valley Land Trust



Dave Bellack, Senior Vice President and General Counsel of Aspen Skiing Company, has been appointed to the Aspen Valley Land Trust Board of Directors. Bellack is a member of the Colorado Ski Country U.S.A Board of Trustees and past member and president of the City of Denver Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. He is a graduate of Leadership Aspen, a former member of the Club 20 Executive Committee and participated in the "50 for Colorado" leadership training program of the Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry.



Sky Hotel and The Little Nell support conservation



A very generous program at the trendy Sky Hotel and the Five Star Little Nell is reaping big benefits for Aspen Valley Land Trust and conservation efforts in the valley. Guests at the hotels are charged a \$2 per night conservation fee. The charge is voluntary and is gladly removed if a guest objects. The funds will be used by AVLT to preserve open space throughout the valley.

Aspen Valley Land Trust

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**320 Main Street, #204
Carbondale, CO 81623
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avlt@avlt.org . www.avlt.org

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