

# THE ASPEN TIMES

## Preservation proposal should be a valleywide effort

We are lucky here in the Roaring Fork Valley. Yes, suburban sprawl has appeared here and there, but a number of local land preservation programs have kept one of the most attractive areas in Colorado from being completely overrun by development.

One of those groups is the Aspen Valley Land Trust, which is pondering a new program that could make it even more effective in protecting the valley's remaining open spaces. The trust generally acts as a "holding entity," doing the necessary work to protect donated properties, but it now has a chance to expand its work and perhaps actively acquire property.

During its early years AVLT relied almost exclusively on contributions. Over the years it has come to rely more on government grants, including money from Great Outdoors Colorado. The trust has used that money wisely to secure prime pieces of property throughout the valley, and it is currently pursuing a conservation easement on 200 acres of stunning ranch land on East Mesa near Carbondale.

Now, a proposal has surfaced to help AVLT raise more money for preservation. We believe it's a sound proposal that deserves support from the valley's lodge and hotel owners.

The idea is modeled after a Jackson Hole Land Trust program that encourages area lodges to tack an optional \$2 fee on every guest's bill. All money raised goes directly to the trust, which can use it to buy property, cover expenses or build a fund to attract matching grants.

According to Ron Harrison of Jackson's Rusty Parrot Lodge, most guests are happy to pay the fee once they understand where the money goes. However, those who wish to opt out may do so.

We support this proposal, with at least one caveat.

First, as currently proposed, AVLT would focus its lobbying efforts on lodges in Aspen and Snowmass. We believe this must be a valleywide effort, as AVLT works to preserve property from Glenwood to Aspen and beyond. Basalt, Carbondale and Glenwood should participate, especially since many of AVLT's candidate properties are in the middle and lower valley.

Second, AVLT's program must follow the Jackson model by making the fee optional. Our guests shouldn't be forced to pay the fee, which might feel to some like gouging. If, however, it is clearly explained that donations will help preserve this beautiful valley, we think most people will happily contribute.

The idea of this program isn't to raise a fortune; Jackson Hole has raised about \$150,000 over four years. But it could be a boost for a valuable organization, and it could give lodge owners and guests an opportunity to help protect our environment.


[Print Friendly](#)

[Email This Story](#)

Fine Home & Condominium  
Rentals from Glenwood to Aspen



Call Today  
1-800-759-3686

FIRST CHOICE PROPERTIES  
& MANAGEMENT

[BACK](#)