

THE ASPEN TIMES

Ryan parcel locked up as open space

By **Jeremy Heiman**

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The financial details have finally been worked out for the purchase of the Ryan parcel, in the heart of Ashcroft Ski Touring's trail system.

Pitkin County's Open Space and Trails program, the Aspen Valley Land Trust and a group of private donors have come up with the money to prevent the development of the property and allow it to be traded to the U.S. Forest Service for another piece of property nearby. The deal is to be finalized at 10 a.m. Wednesday.

Reid Haughey, executive director of AVLTL, said the financial contingency of the deal was closed Friday morning. A contract was worked out in September, but since that time some anxious moments have been spent trying to raise money to complete the deal. The contract specified that \$475,000 was to be raised from private individuals, but the Land Trust agreed to take on additional debt because not enough money had been raised in contributions.

"Thanks to the extreme generosity of Lynn Mace, we were able to close," Haughey said Friday. Commitments of funds from Mace, John Wilcox, Leonard Lauder and Bill Solomon, along with a group of smaller donors who put up about \$5,000, made up the last piece of the pie.

The purchase price was set at \$3,225,000, with the Open Space program putting up \$1.25 million and loaning AVLTL's \$1.75 million for its share.

The 35-acre parcel was formerly owned by the estate of skiing pioneer Ted Ryan. Key cross-country ski trails cross part of the property under a lease to Ashcroft Ski Touring.

David Middleton, owner of the Elk Mountain Lodge in Ashcroft, bought the parcel to prevent its development over two and one-half years ago when it appeared it would be sold as a site for a luxury home. At that time he hoped the Forest Service would be able to buy the property, but federal red tape prevented a quick deal.

The nonprofit groups and private donors stepped in to relieve Middleton of the burden of debt.



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