
Fund will assure Aspen man's passion for preservation will continue

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ASPEN, Colorado – Lathrop Strang's efforts to preserve cattle ranches in western Colorado continues despite his tragic death earlier this year.

Aspen Valley Land Trust (AVLT) has dedicated a special fund in Strang's name to help ranchers place conservation easements on their land, according to Martha Cochran, the nonprofit organization's executive director.

Strang served on AVLT's board of directors for seven years. He left the board because of term limits shortly before his death in a backcountry skiing accident on Mount Sopris April 28. He was 46 at the time of his death. Strang was passionate about preserving lands that could help feed the valley.

"That's where his heart was," Cochran said. "He always had the perspective of the ranchers in mind."

Lathrop grew up on one of the most spectacular ranches in the valley. His parents, Mike and Kit Strang, have run their cattle ranch in Missouri Heights since 1965.

AVLT was designated by Strang's family as one of the entities or causes that people could contribute to in his memory after he died. Cochran said the land trust received a significant amount of money in his name.

AVLT staff considered commissioning a sculpture or creating an annual award in Lathrop's name, but Kit encouraged them to apply the funds in a more useful way, Cochran said.

The staff came up with the idea of creating a long-term fund to help ranchers pay some of the costs associated with preserving their land. The conservation process is complex because of interaction with state and federal tax codes. The process can cost \$20,000 to \$30,000.

The Lathrop Strang Fund will defer part of those costs for deals that AVLT handles. One of the conditions is the deals must involve conservation of working cattle ranches. It's not based on need. That conservation process gives ranchers tax credits or other tax advantages but allows them to keep working the land. In return, they surrender part or all of the development rights.

AVLT is the oldest land trust in Colorado. It has helped private landowners preserve more than 28,000 acres in the Roaring Fork and lower Colorado River valleys since it was created in 1967.

Cochran said the Lathrop fund was applied for the first time this summer to conservation deals involving ranches in Spring Valley and Divide Creek.

Donations for the Lathrop Strang Fund can be made online by visiting www.avlt.org or via mail to Aspen Valley Land Trust, 320 Main St., Suite 204, Carbondale, CO 81623.
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